

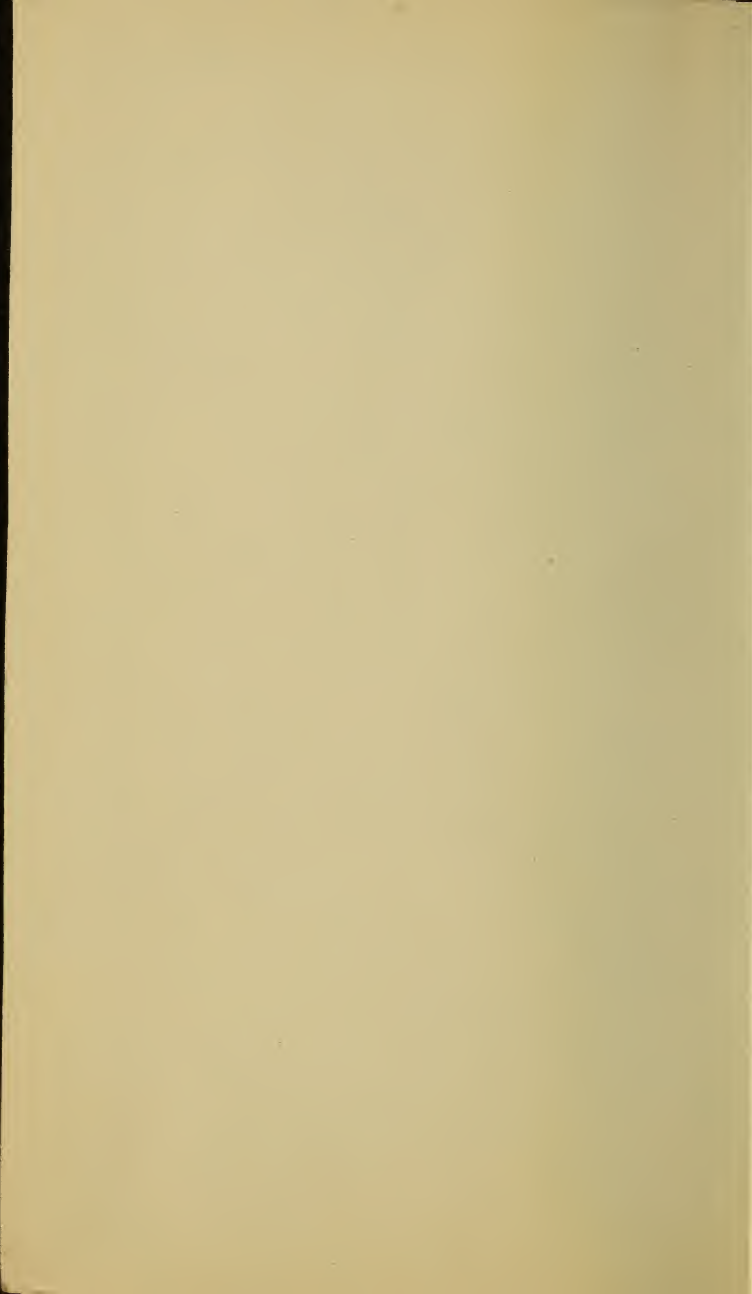


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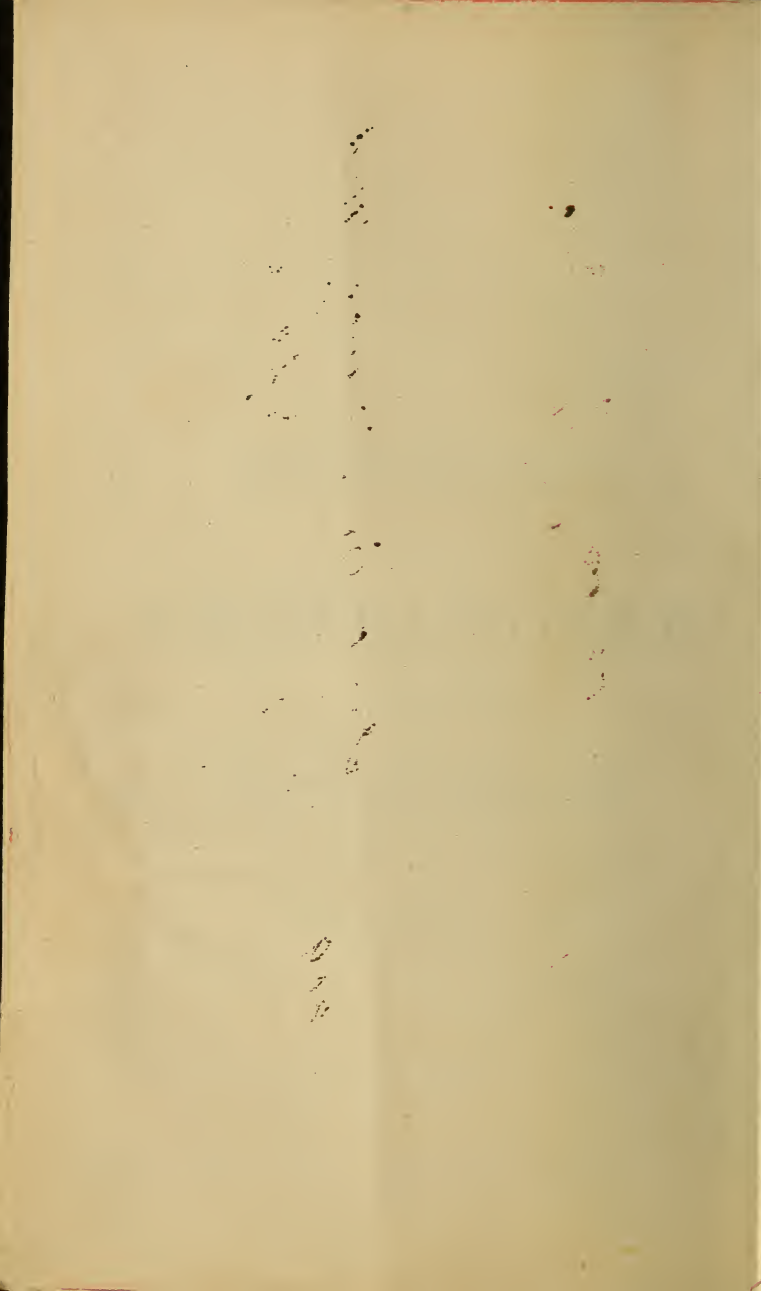
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COMPLETE COURSE
OF
MEDITATIONS
FOR THE USE OF
THE SISTERS OF CHARITY.



Daughters of Charity of Saint Vincent
" de Paul, Emmitsburg, Md

MEDITATIONS

FOR THE ANNUAL RETREAT

FOR THE USE OF

THE SISTERS OF CHARITY.

SECOND EDITION.

JOHN MURPHY & CO.

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REGULATIONS

FOR THE ANNUAL RETREAT.

On the eve of the Retreat, the Sisters assemble at 5.30 p. m., in the place appointed for the exercises, there to make the preparatory meditation. After the *Veni, Sancte*, and the invocation, *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated, the Sister selected to read the meditations, will read the third point. At 6 o'clock, the conclusion is made, followed by the particular examen, according to custom : then, supper.

On leaving the refectory, the Sisters repair to the Retreat room, recite the *Angelus* at the sound of the bell, the *Da pacem* and a decade of the chaplet ; after which, the Missionary appointed to give the Retreat, says : 1. *Veni, Creator*, with the versicle and prayer ; 2. *Ave, maris stella*, with versicle and prayer, followed by the prayer of St. Joseph and that of St. Vincent, under one conclusion ; terminating with the invocation : *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated. The Sisters respond to these divers prayers. The Missionary then makes his exhortation

on the Importance of the Retreat, and the Means of profiting by it.

Nota.—When this opening Instruction is not possible, it is supplied, after the above-mentioned prayers, by the reading of the preparatory meditation, the the third point of which was read before the meditation at 5.30.

Evening prayers follow immediately, commenced, according to custom, by the *Veni, Sancte*, and *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated; followed by the reading of the first point of the meditation for the next day, reserving the second point to be read after prayers: this method is followed during the Retreat.

RETREAT.

Order of the Day.

A. M.

4 o'clock : Rising.

4.30 : Meditation : reading of the first point only ; the second point, read the evening before, is omitted ;

4.50, the third point of the meditation is read :

5.15 : Conclusion of meditation followed by the customary prayers. After the *Veni, Creator*, offering of the work ; the offering of the chaplet is made in the afternoon.

5.30 : Holy Sacrifice of Mass, followed immediately by the Litany of St. Joseph, a *Pater* and *Ave*,

with the invocation : *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated, and a chapter from the *Imitation*, as indicated for each day, in the order of Spiritual Readings inserted in this volume, page 209, etc.

The *Veni, Sancte*, is not said before the Litany of St. Joseph and the reading of the *Imitation*, as these are a continuation of the foregoing exercises.

6.45 : Breakfast, after which, free time until 8 o'clock. The free time is not to be spent in idleness or dissipation ; it should be employed in confession, Direction, interior examen, in performing the Sacramental penance, or even in domestic duties.

8 o'clock : Conference, followed by fifteen minutes' reflection upon the subject treated.

9.15 : Office of the Holy Ghost, found in the Formulary, but without being preceded by the *Veni, Sancte*.

Immediately after the Office of the Holy Ghost, follows the second Spiritual Reading designated for each day, in this volume, page 209, etc. *Veni, Sancte*, omitted.

10.30 : Meditation, until a few minutes before half-past eleven : Conclusion and particular examen, as usual ; then, dinner, during which the greatest modesty, silence, and recollection should be observed, with strict attention to the reading. This reading is to be selected from the Life of St. Vincent, of Mademoiselle Le Gras, of those Sisters of Charity most distinguished for their piety ; or,

from the Letters and Advices of St. Vincent and of Mademoiselle Le Gras; or even from some of the Circulars of the Superiors General, and of the Superioresses of the Company.

On leaving the refectory, the *Da pacem* with the prayer, is said, without, however, adding the decade of the chaplet. Then, recess until one o'clock.

During this recess, the Sisters may occupy themselves interiorly with the things of God, but in a less serious manner than during the rest of the day. They may also engage in some light work which does not require much application of mind.

P. M.

1 o'clock: *Veni, Sancte*, and *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated, and the chaplet; the offering of the chaplet is made kneeling; after the announcement of the first mystery, the Sisters remain seated until the Litany, which is said kneeling. After the chaplet, *Veni, Sancte*, and *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated; and the: Third reading: Common Rules, indicated for each day in the Order of Readings, page 209, etc., of this volume.

2 o'clock: Conference, followed by the Act of Adoration, and fifteen minutes' reflection upon the subject treated.

3.15: *Veni, Sancte*, and *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated: the Consideration, which

should be read as the meditation, but with shorter reflections after each point. Then, the Litany of St. Vincent, a *Pater* and *Ave* for the two Families and for the poor.

4.15: *Veni, Sancte*, and *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated; a *Pater* and *Ave* for those recommended to our prayers, and the: Fourth reading upon the subject indicated for each day of the Retreat, page 209, etc., of this volume.

5 o'clock: Meditation until a few minutes before six o'clock, when the particular examen is made, followed by supper. Grace, as at dinner.

After supper, recess until seven o'clock.

7 o'clock: *Veni, Sancte*, and *O Mary, conceived without sin*, thrice repeated: Repetition of Meditation, except on Sundays and Festivals, should any occur during the Retreat.

7.30: Evening prayers; reading of the subject of meditation for the next day; then, retiring.

On the last day of the Retreat, the Sister appointed to read the evening meditation, concludes the reading of the third point at the *Nota*, which precedes the little act of consecration to the Blessed Virgin.

Before the conclusion of the meditation, the Sister who conducts the Retreat, makes this act of consecration aloud.

The next morning, the Sisters assemble, as usual, in the Retreat room, for the morning exercises, to

which is added the offering of the chaplet. Immediately after Holy Mass and thanksgiving, the Sister who conducts the Retreat, terminates it, by the Act of Consecration to the Sacred Heart, and the other prayers designated in this volume, page 203.

IMPORTANT OBSERVATIONS.

1. It may happen, in some particular circumstances, that the Conferences or other exercises cannot take place at the time prescribed in the Regulations; Our Most Honored Father then authorizes a change of hour, without, however, omitting any exercise.

2. Having abridged the Meditations, Considerations, and Spiritual Readings, so as not to exceed the time allotted for them, Our Most Honored Father recommends that nothing further be retrenched therefrom.

3. When a Sister is prevented from making the Annual Retreat with her companions at the House, or in another place, she should not, on this account, consider herself dispensed, but she should make it privately. This is an important point of the Common Rules which St. Vincent strongly recommends in several of his Conferences; consequently, it is the duty of the Sister Servants to see that it is observed: the case is the same, and with far greater reason, should an entire House be in

similar circumstances. The Sisters who make the Retreat privately, should follow the order prescribed in the Regulations; substituting the Instructions by reading the two Conferences appointed for each day, and which will be found in the Third Volume of the Conferences, new Edition, 1846 :

First day.—Morning: Upon Insensibility with regard to the things of Salvation.
Evening: Upon Confession.

Second day.—Morning: Upon a good and a bad Conscience.
Evening: Upon Tepidity and the means of avoiding it.

Third day.—Morning: Upon the Particular Judgment.
Evening: Upon Holy Communion.

Fourth day.—Morning: On Compunction of Heart.
Evening: Upon the Necessity of laboring for our Sanctification.

Fifth day.—Morning: Upon Fidelity to Vows.
Evening: Upon Poverty.

Sixth day.—Morning: Upon Obedience.
Evening: Upon Meekness towards the Poor.

Seventh day.—Morning: Upon the Holy Rules.
Evening: Upon Simplicity.

Eighth day.—Morning: Upon Humility.

Evening: Upon the Union which
should exist among the Sisters of
Charity.

MEDITATIONS
FOR THE ANNUAL RETREAT
OF THE
SISTERS OF CHARITY.

PRAYERS FOR THE OPENING OF THE RETREAT.

VENI, Creator Spiritus,
Mentes tuorum visita,
Imple superna gratia,
Quæ tu creasti pectora.
Qui diceris Paraclitus,
Altissimi donum Dei,
Fons vivus, ignis, charitas,
Et spiritalis unctio.

Tu septiformis munere,
Digitus Paternæ dexteræ;
Tu rite promissum Patris,
Sermone ditans guttura.

Accende lumen sensibus!
Infunde amorem cordibus:
Infirma nostri corporis
Virtute firmans perpeti.

Hostem repellas longius,
Pacemque dones protinus:
Ductore sic te prævio
Vitemus omne noxium.

14 PRAYERS FOR THE OPENING OF THE RETREAT.

Per te sciamus da Patrem,
Noscamus atque Filium;
Teque utriusque Spiritum
Credamus omni tempore.

*(Last stanza—from Trinity
Sunday to Easter.)*

Deo Patri sit gloria,
Ejusque soli Filio,
Cum Spiritu Paraclito,
Nunc et per omne sæculum.

Amen.

*(From Easter until Eve
of Trinity Sunday.)*

Deo Patri sit gloria,
Et Filio qui a mortuis
Surrexit, ac Paraclito,
In sæculorum sæcula.

Amen.

V. Emitte Spiritum tuum et creabuntur;

R. Et renovabis faciem terræ.

OREMUS.

DEUS, qui corda fidelium Sancti Spiritus illustratione docuisti; da nobis in eodem Spiritu recta sapere, et de ejus semper consolatione gaudere. Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

R. Amen.

Ave, maris stella,
Dei Mater alma,
Atque semper virgo,
Felix cœli porta.

Sumens illud Ave
Gabrielis ore,
Funda nos in pace,
Mutans Evæ nomen.

Solve vincla reis,
Profer lumen cæcis;
Mala nostra pelle
Bona cuncta posce.

Monstra te esse matrem;
Sumat per te preces
Qui pro nobis natus,
Tulit esse tuus.

Virgo singularis,
Inter omnes mitis,
Nos culpis solutos,
Mites fac et castos.

Vitam præsta puram,
Iter para tutum;
Ut videntes Jesum,
Semper collætémur.

Sit laus Deo Patri,
Summo Christo decus,
Spiritui Sancto;
Tribus honor unus. *Amen.*

V. Diffusa est gratia in labiis tuis.

R. Propterea benedixit te Deus in æternum.

OREMUS.

CONCEDE nos famulos tuos, quæsumus, Domine Deus, perpetuâ mentis et corporis sanitate gaudere; et gloriosâ beatæ Mariæ semper Virginis intercessionem, a presenti liberari tristitiâ, et æternâ perfrui lætitiâ.

O Mary, conceived without sin:—*three times.*

TO ST. JOSEPH.

SANCTISSIMÆ Genetricis tuæ Sponsi, quæsumus, Domine, mentis adjuvemur; ut quod possibilitas nostra non obtinet, ejus nobis intercessionem donetur.

TO ST. VINCENT.

DEUS, qui ad salutem pàuperum, et cleri disciplinam, novam in Ecclesiâ tua per Beatum Vincentium Familiam Congregasti: da, quæsumus, ut eodem nos quoque spírítu ferventes, et amémus quod amavit, et quod docuit operémur.

Per Dominum nostrum Jesum Christum Filium tuum, qui tecum vivit et regnat in unitate ejusdem Spiritus Sancti Deus, per omnia sæcula sæculorum. *Amen.*

MEDITATION

FOR THE EVE OF THE RETREAT.

(When it does not open with an Instruction.)

FIRST POINT. *Motives to induce you to make the Retreat well.*—The first motive is, that God calls you to it, and asks that you neglect none of the means that may insure its success. The Retreat is a grace of predilection; if you abuse it, you will draw upon yourself the malediction of God; and, instead of being the basis of your salvation, the Retreat, perhaps, will be the cause of your eternal damnation! Enter upon it, therefore, with an earnest desire to do all that God requires of you.

The second motive which should urge you to make the Retreat well, is, the great need you have of it. Consider attentively, on the one hand, the holiness of your Vocation, and, on the other, the condition of your soul; and you will acknowledge that you are still very far from the perfection which our Lord demands of you. Now, in the mind of God, this Retreat is destined to re-instate you in fervor; for, St. Vincent tells us: “Of all the means which God provides for souls, to reform the disorders of their life, none has produced more efficacious, more marvelous results than that of the exercises of the

Retreat." Be, therefore, fully convinced that during these days of retirement, you will receive from the liberality of God, special graces that will enable you to repair the past, and to do better in future.

Consider, in the third place, that this Retreat may be your last. Several of your companions who made the Retreat a year ago, have been summoned before the tribunal of God: who knows, if it may not be the same with you, after this one!

In fine, consider how precious are the fruits of a Retreat well made. The eyes of heaven and of earth are fixed upon you at this moment, to know what they may expect from you. In heaven, Jesus Christ, the Immaculate Mary, the holy Angels, all the Saints, particularly St. Vincent, conjure you to correspond to the designs of God upon you. On earth, multitudes of afflicted creatures extend their arms towards you, supplicating you to fill your heart with the spirit of God, that you may impart it to them, and become for them a source of salvation.

How powerful are these motives, to induce you to make this Retreat with joy, fervor, and gratitude!

SECOND POINT. *The End you should propose to yourself.*—The Retreat does not consist merely in performing various exercises of piety, in observing silence, listening to holy instructions, in spiritual readings, and fervent meditations: these means are necessary to make the Retreat well, but they are not, properly speaking, the end of the Retreat.

What, then, is the end of the Retreat? It is to discover all your faults, to ascertain the source from which they spring, their fatal consequences, and the remedies proper to be applied; to call to your mind the obligations which your Vocation imposes upon you, and the virtues you should practise; to excite within you an earnest desire to faithfully correspond to the designs of God upon you; to adopt the necessary means to advance in the path of perfection and in the spirit of your Vocation. The end of the Retreat, is, to renew your fervor, to divest yourself of the old man, to clothe yourself with the new man, who is created in justice and holiness of truth.

But, to obtain these happy results, you must, first, purify your soul from its stains, by a good confession; you must deplore all your infidelities in the bitterness of your soul, and take strong resolutions to watch over yourself, that you may not relapse into them. You must, then, apply yourself to acquire all the perfection to which you are called.

But this demands great attention and serious labor. You must enter into yourself and carefully examine: 1. In what manner you fulfil the obligations you have contracted at the holy Altar, and so many times renewed. 2. Examine, with regard to your Holy Rules, to see if you are faithful in observing them. 3. Examine yourself in regard to the spirit of your Vocation, to ascertain if you possess the virtues which should characterize a good

Sister of Charity. 4. In fine, examine yourself in relation to all your duties ; reflect on all your obligations, one after the other, and take the resolution to correct all that you find defective in yourself. But, where is the light to aid you in dispelling the darkness that conceals the state of your conscience? This light will be found in the maxims of Jesus Christ, and in the admirable instructions left you by St. Vincent. . . . This is what you have to do during this Retreat ; see if you are disposed to undertake so important a task ; beg of God to grant you the proper dispositions if you are not already in them, or to strengthen you therein if, happily, you possess them.

THIRD POINT. *Means of making the Retreat well.*—These means are of two kinds : the one interior, the other exterior. First, the interior means. 1. To enter upon the Retreat with great fervor and joy of heart, for the Lord loves the cheerful giver. Moreover, is it not an unspeakable happiness to entertain yourself with God ? 2. To conceive an ardent desire to reform your life, to advance in virtue, and to profit by this Retreat ; to amend your defects, and to labor earnestly, hereafter, for the acquisition of all virtues. 3. Great generosity in making all the sacrifices God may demand of you. 4. Not to seek sensible devotion, for the success of the Retreat does not depend upon this ; not to yield to discouragement, should you experience only aridity. 5. To entertain within

yourself, an earnest spirit of prayer; having frequent recourse to God, by fervent aspirations, addressing yourself to the divine Goodness with truly filial confidence. A last, but most efficacious means, is, to place your Retreat under the special protection of the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and St. Vincent, that they may obtain for you the grace of making it profitably.

Consider now, the exterior means: 1. Entire solitude, or profound recollection. God is not in commotion, and He leads you into solitude that He may speak to your heart. You should, then, have no communication with persons not engaged with you in the Retreat: you should consider yourself as alone with God. Shun, therefore, all distracting thoughts, and establish yourself in perfect recollection. Hence, the importance of silence, which you should not interrupt without absolute necessity; and, even in that case, you should speak but little, and in a low voice. 2. Great modesty, particularly with regard to the eyes; for it is certain, that the demon often avails himself of our curiosity to introduce distraction into the mind. 3. Exact fidelity to the Regulations of the Retreat, which you should consider as the expression of the will of God, and an essential condition to draw His grace upon you. In fine, a last means, which will be very useful, is, to offer to God, daily, some little mortification, and practise some penance, to incline

Him, thereby, to pardon your sins, and grant you all the graces you need.

These are the principal means you should employ; if you are faithful in putting them in practice, you will derive the greatest advantage from your Retreat.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Creation.

FIRST POINT. *The benefit of Creation.*—Of ourselves we are nothing, and from all eternity we were simply nothing. God, who had no need of us, gave us our being without any merit on our part. Creation, therefore, is a benefit wholly gratuitous. But, how precious is this benefit!—our very existence: our soul with its faculties, our body with its senses. God has created us to His image and likeness; He has given us an understanding to know Him, a heart to love Him, a will and a body to serve Him. Moreover, by a singular effect of His goodness, we have been elevated to a supernatural state, that we may possess God in heaven for all eternity, if, during life, we profit by the graces which He vouchsafes to shed continually upon us. Not only has God created us, but He preserves our being. Each instant of our existence is a new benefit added to thousands of others; and we may truly say, that He gives us life each day and moment.

Oh! how should our hearts exult with joy, when we think of the nobility of our origin! What gratitude do we not owe to God, who thought of us when we were not; who was pleased to give us a

being, and who daily bestows so many marks of benevolence in the numberless gifts He confers upon us ! But, what have we hitherto done to testify our gratitude to God ? Alas ! if we reflect upon our life, we shall discover that we have not known how to appreciate so great a favor. Let us humble ourselves profoundly at the sight of our ingratitude, and consider what we should do for the future.

SECOND POINT. *The end of our Creation.*—God has not created us for transitory honors, for perishable riches, for pleasures that are never free from bitterness ; He has not created us to lead, here below, an easy and agreeable life : He has created us for Himself : as He is our first Beginning, He is also our last End. God has created us and placed us in this world, that we might know Him, love Him, and serve Him ; and thereby, deserve to possess Him eternally in Heaven. Oh ! how great and noble is this end ! But oh ! what a frightful disorder, should we refuse God the love we owe Him by so many titles ! and if, instead of seeking Him in all things, we seek ourselves or creatures ! Ah ! have we not done this many times ? How often have we not refused obedience to God ? How often have we not withdrawn from Him ! How many times have we not given the preference to the creature and despised the Creator ! What a subject of confusion for us ! Ah ! we must, in the sincerity of our heart, ask Him to pardon us, and promise Him that, for the future, we will be more faithful, and submit to His holy will which directs

all things for our good. There is nothing more honorable, nothing more advantageous for us, than to attach ourselves to God and serve Him ; whereas, on the contrary, nothing more degrades us, than to withdraw from Him, to attach ourselves to creatures.

THIRD POINT. *The necessity of aspiring to the End for which we have been created.*—What will be the result of our fidelity in aspiring to the end of our Creation by a good use of the means which God has given us ? The result will be most happy and consoling for us, for thereby, we shall obtain the possession of God ; for this is the recompense He has promised to all who faithfully serve Him : I, myself, will be thy reward exceeding great ; whereas, on the contrary, He threatens with eternal chastisements those who deviate from this end. It is, therefore, an obligation for us to do what God demands of us ; our eternal happiness or misery depends upon it ; consequently, we cannot hesitate ; we must make every effort to attain the end for which we have been created.

But, O Lord, is this what I have hitherto done ? Thou hast called me to reign with Thee in heaven ; Thou hast promised me a kingdom of which death cannot deprive me ;—a kingdom, in which all the desires of my heart will be fully satisfied ;—a kingdom, in comparison with which, all the kingdoms of the earth are nothing ; and all that Thou requirest of me, to put me in possession of so great a happiness and glory, is, to love and serve Thee ; whilst Thou

dost threaten me with the most terrible penalties, if I do not labor to secure this inestimable good. And, nevertheless, until now, I have manifested only indifference for the promises Thou hast made me! I have preferred to disgrace and degrade myself by seeking to gratify the passions of my heart; I have sought for miserable satisfaction from creatures, and have exposed myself to be eternally lost! Ah! from this moment, I begin to understand the folly of my past conduct; from this instant I wish to love and serve Thee; from this instant I give myself to Thee entirely and forever! I beg Thy pardon a thousand times for the contempt I have had for Thy promises; and I pray Thee to strengthen me in the resolution I now make to give myself unreservedly to Thee, and never to lose sight of the end for which Thou hast created me. Grant me grace to labor constantly to accomplish Thy will upon earth, that I may thereby merit the happiness of seeing and possessing Thee for all eternity in heaven.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On our Vocation to Christianity.

FIRST POINT. *The excellence of our Vocation to Christianity.*—To form some idea of the inestimable favor which God conferred upon us in permitting us to be born in the bosom of the true Religion, let us

consider that nothing is greater than a Christian, when viewed with the eyes of faith. Oh ! how admirable are the wonders operated in that regeneration which takes place, when the baptismal waters flow upon our head. At that moment we are purified from all our stains ; and, in partaking of the divine nature, we become children of God, members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ, and temples of the Holy Spirit. At that moment, we acquire a right to all the graces and treasures which our Lord has confided to His Church. We receive the life of grace, which is the source of the life of glory. “ Now, says St. John, we are the children of God ; but, we do not see what we shall one day be : we know that we shall be like to Him, for we shall see Him as He is.”

Behold what God reserves for us in eternity ; and, while waiting to bestow upon us this great glory, He manifests in a thousand ways, that He regards us as His children : He provides for all our wants ; He has given us Angels for our Guardians, Saints for our protectors, and Mary for our Mother. He has given us His flesh to eat, and His word to serve us as a flambeau. Has not the Apostle reason to call us a holy nation, a royal priesthood, a ransomed people ? Should we be astonished after this, to hear St. Leo, on addressing a Christian, say : “ Know thy dignity, O Christian, and strive to live in a manner conformable thereto ! ” And is it surprising that the first Christians when called to confess the

faith before Pagan tribunals, made no other answer to the questions put to them concerning their age, country, and condition, than this : I am a Christian ? No, we need not be astonished at this ; but what should be a subject of amazement and cover us with confusion, is, that, heretofore, we have so little appreciated this signal favor ! Let us ask of God to pardon our negligence ; let us implore Him to make us comprehend the value of this grace ; that, henceforth, we may live only to testify our gratitude to Him.

SECOND POINT. *To what does the Quality of Christian oblige us ?*—It obliges us : 1. To avoid all kinds of sin ; 2, to adopt the maxims of Jesus Christ as the rule of our conduct ; 3, to imitate this divine Saviour ; 4, to live of His divine life, in such a manner as to be able to say with St. Paul : “I live, now, not I ; but Jesus Christ liveth in me.” These obligations are implicitly comprised in these words of the great Apostle : “All you who have been baptized in Jesus Christ, have been clothed with Jesus Christ.” Can there be anything more honorable than to follow the counsels of such a Master, and to walk in His footsteps ?

But, how does our life compare with the maxims and examples of Jesus Christ ? Ah ! what excuse shall we allege in our own justification, if we do not imitate this divine Saviour ? Is there anything difficult in His law ? To what is it reduced ? To this : namely, to love God. And what is necessary

to become a good Christian? To have a good heart, that is all. For, if we have a good heart, how can we refrain from loving a God who has loved us so much, and lavished so many benefits upon us? At the consideration of such favors and graces, should not our hearts feel impelled to love so good a God? He is the best, the most tender of Fathers, who promises to reward our fidelity with the most abundant blessings in this life, and to give us heaven with all its glory and felicity, hereafter. Ah! Lord, grant that I may never lose sight of the reward Thou hast in reserve for me; penetrate me with the dread of Thy judgments, that I may fear to displease Thee, and generously embrace all that is most agreeable to Thee.

THIRD POINT. *The means which God gives us to comply with the obligations imposed by Christianity.*—In the first place, God has given us His word as a flambeau to enlighten us, to point out those paths wherein we should walk, and those which we should avoid. How do we profit by this means of salvation and perfection? Has not our heart often resembled the highway mentioned in the Gospel, upon which, indeed, the seed fell; but it was soon trodden down by the passer-by, or carried away by the birds of the air? Ah! what a misfortune thus to abuse the word of God! Secondly, Jesus Christ has established in His Church the Sacraments, as so many channels to communicate the waters of grace to our souls. What abundance of grace in the Sacrament

of the Eucharist, since we receive therein Jesus Christ, the Author and source of all grace! But how do we approach these divine sources? What fruit do we derive from the Sacraments which we so frequently receive? Thirdly: Another means given us by God, is prayer: "Ask," says He to us, "and you shall receive; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you." And elsewhere: "All that you will ask the Father in my name, He will give it to you." Yes, all without exception. Behold, then, a fountain always open to us, from which we may derive all we need. Ah! Lord, if I do not fulfil my obligations can I say that assistance is wanting? I have only to ask for the graces that are necessary for me, assured of obtaining them, provided I sincerely desire them. Fourthly, God has also given us the example of the Saints who have preceded us, and opened to us the way to perfection. With what zeal should not the consideration of so many noble examples inspire us!

Our Lord has given us an infinity of other special means, which His Providence dispenses each day and moment with a goodness truly paternal. It remains for us to profit by them, if we wish to avoid the misfortune that threatens all who do not obey the Gospel; that is, who do not live as true Christians. Ah! Lord, I must confess before heaven and earth, that I have never yet comprehended the greatness of the favor Thou didst confer on me by calling me to Christianity, preferably to so many others

whom Thou hast left in the darkness of idolatry, and who would have made far better use of it than I have done. I acknowledge that, heretofore, I have not served Thee as a well-beloved child should serve the best of Fathers. I confess that I have been unfaithful to all the obligations which I contracted at the baptismal font, when I had the happiness of becoming Thy child ; I acknowledge that I have abused the means Thou gavest me to secure my salvation ; I blush at my infidelities, and wish it were in my power to expiate them with tears of blood. I deplore the day on which I had the misfortune of forgetting so many holy engagements ; and from this moment, I take the resolution to repair the past, by leading a truly Christian life,—laboring to walk in Thy footsteps, and putting in practice all the truths thou hast taught me. And, although after such abuse of Thy liberality, I do not deserve to receive any more favors, yet, I have the sweet confidence that Thou wilt graciously listen to the desires of my heart, and assist me to keep these holy resolutions.

CONSIDERATION.

On the Sanctification of our Ordinary Actions.

FIRST POINT. *How important it is to sanctify each of our Actions.*—1. Fidelity in the performance of all our actions, is a powerful means to draw down the benedictions of God upon us. There is no

action, how small soever, that may not become agreeable to God, if accomplished with the intention of pleasing Him; and which may not, likewise, become for us a source of grace and blessing. We may say, that actions well performed have the same efficacy before God as prayer; hence, a Doctor of the Church says: "He who labors, prays." Is not this a consoling thought for a Sister of Charity, called, as she is, by her Vocation, to labor continually for God; and is it not well calculated to animate her with an earnest desire to perform all her actions in the best manner possible?

2. This fidelity is also an infallible means of arriving at high perfection. Perfection does not consist in continual prayer, nor in performing extraordinary works; but, in doing all our actions well. Our Lord Jesus Christ, who came upon earth to be our model, willed that this testimony should be rendered of Him: He hath done all things well. The day will come when we shall behold in heaven persons little known upon earth, who lived, apparently, in a very ordinary manner, but who will be far more elevated in glory than others who created a great sensation during their life, by the wonderful works they performed; the former will have attained a higher degree of glory, because they increased the merit of their good deeds by the greater purity of their intention.

3. Another powerful motive to encourage us in the well-performance of our actions, is, that they

are a source of merit. God will recompense those actions only, which are done for Him ; consequently, if we act without any intention, as negligent persons frequently do ; or with an evil intention, as those who seek themselves in their actions, we have no reward to expect. Jesus Christ Himself warns us of this in His Gospel, when, speaking of the Scribes and Pharisees who made long prayers, macerated their bodies by rigid fasts, and gave abundant alms through ostentation, He says : “ Amen, amen, I say to you, they have received their reward.” Oh ! how many works in which we now take complacency,—which attract the praise of men,—will be rejected on the day of judgment, as works of iniquity ! What grief will not a Sister of Charity experience when she perceives, but too late, that she has sown, to gather nothing ; and that, after much toil and trouble, she finds her hands empty of good works ! But, on the contrary, if we endeavor to perform all our actions well, we shall then have great reason to rejoice, because we shall receive a reward even for the smallest in appearance,—were it only a cup of cold water given in the name of the Lord. Oh ! how much merit we may daily and hourly acquire, if we are only faithful to perform well all that we do ! Each action will be for us the source of a new degree of glory, if our intention is pure. It then rests with us to enhance the beauty of the celestial crown in reserve for us, and to augment the glory that awaits us in eternity.

What a misfortune, should we lose this precious advantage !

SECOND POINT. *The Conditions necessary to sanctify our Actions.*—1. Our actions are meritorious for heaven only when performed in the state of grace ; for a soul defiled by mortal sin, is dead in the sight of God ; consequently, it can produce no living fruit. 2. In order that our actions be holy, they must be free from anything evil in themselves or in the circumstances connected with them. For example, performing extraordinary penances against the intentions of Superiors ; engaging in pious exercises, at a time when other duties are to be fulfilled ; giving money or clothing to the poor without having asked the requisite permission ;—all these actions would be against the will of God ; consequently, they could not be agreeable to Him. 3. In order to sanctify our actions, we must have a pure intention ; that is, we must propose to ourselves a good and supernatural end :—the glory of God, the sanctification of our soul, the edification of our neighbor. It is not necessary that this intention be actual, explicit ; it is sufficient that it be virtual and implied, comprised in the constant and general intention to please God. However, it is much more advantageous frequently to renew this intention ; because, on account of our inconstancy, we are often exposed to the danger of losing sight of our resolutions, of seeking ourselves, and taking complacency in what we do.

We must, therefore, be vigilant, and promptly reject every sentiment of vanity that may arise in the mind ; and continue with peaceful firmness to disavow such thoughts when they are persistent.

4. That our actions may acquire a high degree of perfection, we should perform them in a spirit of faith, and in union with God. The Holy Spirit Himself invites us to this : Walk before me and be perfect ; that is, perform in the presence of God and in union with God, whatever you do, and you will attain perfection. This is what our divine Saviour did during His mortal life. By acting in this manner, we shall also imitate the Angels who labor continually for God and in union with Him ; and if, in the course of our actions any imperfection should glide in, we shall immediately perceive it, and thereby prevent the merit of our works from being diminished.

Let us enter into ourselves, and examine if we are faithful in fulfilling the conditions necessary for the sanctification of our actions. Do we not in them frequently seek to gain the esteem of creatures, or to avoid the reproaches of Superiors ! Alas ! how many actions are performed mechanically, through routine, from a purely natural motive, without any reference to God ! Ah ! henceforth, let us strive more earnestly to sanctify all our actions.

THIRD POINT. *Means that may aid us to sanctify our Actions.*—The first means, is, to raise our mind and heart to God at the beginning of our principal

actions, in order to obtain the grace to perform them well. This practice is earnestly recommended to us by St. Vincent, and one in which he never failed ; hence, the Holy Spirit imparted to him the strongest lights, and directed him in all his ways. A Sister of Charity who will faithfully imitate him in this respect, will reap the same advantages.

The second means is, to reanimate our spirit of faith, making some pious reflections before commencing the action : for example, we may say to ourselves : God has bestowed upon me so many graces, should I not do everything to please Him ?—If I sanctify this action, I shall acquire a new degree of glory for all eternity ; could I neglect to secure this happiness ?—I am about to make my meditation, to assist at Holy Mass ; how happy I should consider myself to speak with our Lord, to assist at His death on Calvary, which scene is about to be renewed on the Altar !—How could I yield to negligence in actions so holy in themselves, and so profitable for the salvation of my soul ?—I am going to wait upon the poor ; it is Jesus Christ whom I shall serve in their person : oh ! with what love, with what respect I should minister to them !

A third means, is, to be faithful in offering to God every morning, all the actions of the day ; testifying to Him that we have no desire but to please Him ; and that we reject, beforehand, all thoughts of complacency and self-seeking that might surprise us. We make this act, it is true, but, in

what manner? . . . It is not sufficient to offer all our actions to God in the morning, we should also renew this offering at the commencement of each action, particularly, before the principal ones; and also, when the clock strikes. Let us make every effort to establish ourselves in this practice; she who has contracted the habit of it, has found a great treasure. If we desire to render our actions still more agreeable to God, let us not be content to testify that we do them for Him; but, let us tell Him that by each of our actions, we desire to give Him as much glory as the Angels and Saints render Him in heaven. The more elevated our intention, the more meritorious will our actions be; for God has regard to our desires when they proceed from a sincere heart.

These are the principal means we should adopt for the sanctification of our actions: let us examine if we have employed them during the past; if we find that we have neglected to do so, let us resolve to be more faithful in future, that we may not lose the fruit of our good works; but, that they may prove a source of glory and happiness to us for all eternity.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Benefit of our Vocation.

FIRST POINT. *The precious Advantages of our Vocation.*—1. It is sublime. Let us listen to St.

Vincent: "The principal end for which God has called and assembled the Daughters of Charity, is to honor our Lord Jesus Christ as the source and model of all charity." Oh! how beautiful, how noble, how exalted is this Vocation! What a subject of admiration and gratitude! After the vocation to the Priesthood, is there, or can there be a more honorable, a more holy state than this? Let us humble ourselves profoundly, considering how unworthy we are of such a Vocation; and let us ask of God to make us comprehend the excellence of it; that, during the remainder of our life, we may testify our gratitude to Him; and endeavor to live in a manner more in accordance with what so sublime a Vocation demands of us.

2. Our Vocation, in separating us from the world, enables us to work out our salvation with greater security. To how many dangers were we not exposed in the midst of the world! Ah! it is not without reason that the world is compared to a stormy sea, whereon we are continually tossed about by tempests, ever in danger of perishing! In the Community, we are, as it were, in the haven of salvation. Could our Lord Jesus Christ, who is so liberal in rewarding such as render Him the smallest services, be unmindful of those who consecrate themselves to serve Him in the person of His members? Ah! had not St. Vincent reason to say, that he knew of no state in which salvation is more easily attained than in ours?

3. A Sister of Charity finds in her Vocation the most efficacious means to elevate her to a high degree of perfection, and to acquire vast treasures of merit for heaven. There is nothing more perfect than the works to which she devotes herself, for she has the happiness of doing what our Lord Jesus Christ did while on earth; she has only to perform all her actions in a spirit of faith, and with the view of pleasing God; and this is very easy; for, in fact, what is her life? She lives only for God, she breathes but for Him. What are her occupations? Prayer, meditation, Holy Mass, spiritual readings, frequentation of the Sacraments, occupy a portion of her day; the remainder is employed in the exercise of works of charity, continually assisting our Lord in the person of the poor. Ah! what treasures of merit she daily amasses! O my Saviour, who hast said in Thy Gospel, that a cup of cold water, given in Thy name, shall not lose its reward, what dost Thou not reserve for a good Sister of Charity? Ah! what cause have I not to humble myself before Thee, for having been called to such a Vocation! Grant me the grace to appreciate as I should, this signal benefit, so that, hereafter, I may return Thee due thanks for Thy infinite goodness towards me!

SECOND POINT. *Obligations of our Vocation.*—

1. We are obliged to labor for the acquisition of far higher perfection than if we had remained in the world. Our Lord, in calling us to the Community,

grants us special graces that we may procure greater glory to God, than the ordinary faithful. This divine Saviour has, therefore, the right to say to us, as to St. Peter: Lovest thou me more than these? Consequently, it is a strict obligation for us to aspire to perfection; and if, like to so many negligent Christians, we should limit ourselves to accomplish only what is absolutely necessary for salvation, we would be unworthy of our Vocation.

2. It is also an obligation for us to acquire the perfection proper to our state; that is to say, the spirit of our Vocation. Now, St. Vincent declares, that this spirit consists in performing all our exercises, both spiritual and corporal, in a spirit of humility, simplicity, and charity, and in union with those which our Lord Jesus Christ performed while on earth. We must, therefore, apply with particular care, to the practice of those virtues which constitute the distinctive characteristic of a Daughter of Charity. In vain shall we wear the livery of our Vocation, if we are not animated with the spirit of our state, which is the interior habit wherewith we must be clothed. Now, are we closely united with our Lord? Do we make His maxims the rule of our conduct? What advancement have we made in the practice of humility, simplicity, and charity?

3. The four vows which we make in the Community, are founded upon the Evangelical maxims, which, for the faithful at large, are only of counsel; but for us, after making the vows, they are a strict

and rigorous obligation binding the conscience. We must not confound a breach of the vow of poverty with a breach of Rule; the wilful violation of this vow is a sin, and a mortal sin, if the matter is important. In like manner, the service of the poor, to which we have engaged ourselves, is not a charitable work of supererogation, as for persons of the world; it is for us an obligation; and we cannot wilfully fail in it, without offending God more or less grievously, according to the magnitude of the matter.

4. God also requires of us that we observe our Holy Rules; although they are not the object of a vow, yet, by voluntarily failing in them, above all, habitually, we act against the designs of God; we expose ourselves to the commission of many faults; we place ourselves in the impossibility of fulfilling the obligations binding upon the conscience, and we scandalize our companions. Hence, theologians teach, that such conduct is not exempt from sin.

Let us enter into ourselves, and examine how we discharge these duties. It is easy to fall into delusion! The time of a Retreat is most favorable to dispel the darkness that obscures the mind. O my God, enlighten me, do not suffer me to live in false security.

THIRD POINT. *The Means furnished by God to attain the end of our Vocation.*—We are not able, of our own strength, nor even with ordinary graces, to acquire the degree of perfection to which we are called. But God never fails to furnish the

special means that will enable us to respond to the designs He has upon us. The first means, is that designated as the grace of vocation. This is a light which the Holy Spirit sheds in our mind, to instruct us in regard to what relates to our Vocation; it is a flame altogether divine, which He enkindles in our hearts to animate them with a holy ardor; this grace of Vocation comprises numberless other graces which we receive according to our needs, in the fulfilment of our duties, in surmounting the difficulties inseparable from our works; strengthening us in our design to devote ourselves to the service of the poor and sick. O my God, what a subject of consolation for me, to think that Thy grace is always with me, to enlighten, sustain, strengthen, and assist me, in overcoming the difficulties in my path! Ah! be forever blessed! . . .

3. Other means which God has given us, are the holy practices of piety which our Rule prescribes: meditation which we have the happiness of making twice a day, and from which we have the power to draw abundant graces; the recitation of the Chaplet and other vocal prayers; the practice of the presence of God; our general and particular examens, so strongly recommended by St. Vincent, and which all the Saints used with so much profit; besides many other little practices of devotion in use among us; and, above all, the Sacraments of Penance and Holy Eucharist which we have the happiness of approaching so often. God does not cease to

make us hear His voice, in order to withdraw us from evil and encourage us in good ; He speaks to us in a thousand different ways : in our conferences, in the advices we receive from our Superiors, in the warnings or encouragements they give us ; in good examples placed before us ; in our monthly Retreats, and, especially, in the Annual Retreat which we have the happiness of making ; and, finally, in each article of our Holy Rules.

O my sweet Jesus, what more couldst Thou do for me ! What return shall I make Thee for the inestimable benefit of my Vocation to the Family of St. Vincent ? I most humbly ask Thy pardon for not having corresponded, as I should have done, to Thy unspeakable goodness. I give Thee thanks for the lights thou hast imparted to me on this first day of the Retreat. Thy charity presses me to give myself unreservedly and forever to Thee. O Immaculate Mother of our Saviour and my beloved Mother, glorious St. Joseph, blessed St. Vincent, obtain for me the grace of being, henceforth, faithful to this resolution !

SECOND DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Mortal Sin.

FIRST POINT. *The malice of Mortal sin.*—What was my conduct when I committed mortal sin? 1. I revolted against God. The Lord laid a command upon me, and I refused to obey Him, that I might gratify my passions. I said to God, if not in words, at least by my actions : It is useless for Thee to give me a law, to threaten me with the most terrible chastisements, to make me the most magnificent promises : I know no other law than that of my passions, no other pleasure than that of satisfying them. How insulting to God, and what folly on my part ! How is it, that a worm of the earth should dare resist the Almighty,—Him who with one word makes the earth tremble to its very foundations? 2. I rendered myself guilty of the blackest ingratitude. Whom did I offend by my sins? Alas ! the most tender of Fathers, who created me to His own image, redeemed me at the price of His precious Blood ; who has bestowed so many benefits upon me ; who has for me a thousand times more love than the tenderest mother entertains for her dearest child. Instead of loving this bountiful God, I have lived only to grieve Him, and to fill His paternal heart with bitterness. Alas !

what baseness ! The Lord cannot but lament at the sight of such ingratitude : “ Ye heavens,” says He, “ listen to my voice, and you, O Earth, give ear. I have fed children, I have watched over them, and they have shown me only contempt.” 3. I crucified Jesus. O my soul, go to the foot of Calvary, and contemplate thy divine Saviour, fastened to the Cross, suspended on four wounds, suffering in body and soul the most inconceivable torments ; ask Him the cause of His death, and He will answer : Thy sins are the cause. Oh ! what a crime, to crucify thy God ! Ah ! my soul, thou didst not think of this when thou wast offending thy God. Now, at least, comprehend the malice of sin, and deplore thy past infidelities.

SECOND POINT. *Effects of Mortal sin.*—1. It gives death to the soul. God is the life of our soul, as the soul is the life of our body. When the body is deprived of life what does it become ? A corpse, exciting horror in all who behold it. Ah ! could we see the change operated in a soul that has the misfortune of committing a mortal sin, we would experience still greater horror. Ah ! come, holy Angels, and see if you can recognize the soul whose beauty once charmed you. And Thou, O my divine Saviour, who didst weep at the death of Lazarus, come, come, and weep anew ; for here is a death far more deserving of tears than that of Lazarus. Thou didst weep, also, on account of the misfortunes about

to fall upon ungrateful Jerusalem, but here are misfortunes far more lamentable.

2. Mortal sin incurs the most terrible chastisements. If we were conscious of all the evil that sin brings upon the soul, it would be impossible to console us! "My tears," said the Prophet, "have become my daily food, because I heard a voice which said to me: Where is thy God?" Where was thy God, ungrateful soul, when thou didst offend Him? Ah! thou hast lost Him; He is far from thee; He has abandoned thee, given thee up to thy enemies, who have come to load thee with chains; thou hast become the slave of Satan. What a calamity, when God withdraws from a soul! With Him all blessings are withdrawn; and in retiring, He pours upon this soul the cup of His wrath; for God abhors sin, and punishes it with severity. Let us call to mind the justice He exercised in regard to the rebel Angels and our first Parents; the entire world swallowed up by the waters of the deluge; the guilty cities consumed by fire from heaven; and the many other chastisements by which our Lord has exercised vengeance against sinners. But, what is all this, in comparison with the justice He will exercise on the terrible day of judgment! What is all this, in comparison with the rigor with which He punishes sin in hell!

O my God, what would have become of me, hadst Thou treated me as I deserve! Ah! I would already be with the damned in hell, for I acknowl-

edge that I have merited it. But why, O my God, hast Thou been so patient with me? Ah! it is because Thou hast designs of mercy upon me. Never, then, my God, permit me to lose the remembrance of Thy bounty, that I may say with holy David: "I will sing eternally the praises of my God."

THIRD POINT. *Consequences to be deduced from the Truths which we have just considered.*—First consequence. If we have the misfortune of being in the state of mortal sin, let us hasten to arise from it. We may be in illusion upon many points of the highest importance;—illusions with regard to the beautiful virtue of chastity, obedience, charity, poverty, and service to the poor. Let us carefully examine ourselves; and should we be in any doubt, let us seek for light from those who know our obligations. We may, also, be in illusion with regard to confessions badly made, from a want of sincerity; we may have doubts without wishing to clear them up; but, why? Because we fear to discover the truth and be obliged to make in confession, humiliating avowals! Although these doubts are sometimes but too well founded, yet, persons will remain entire years in this unhappy state,—frequently approaching the tribunal of Penance and the Holy Table, thus multiplying their sacrileges. O my God, grant me the grace to dispel these illusions, and never to relapse into them for the future!

Second consequence. We should grieve for the sins we have had the misfortune to commit, and

weep for them during the remainder of our life. Let no one say : God has pardoned me those sins. Who could ever have greater assurance of pardon than Magdalen, to whom our divine Saviour Himself said : Many sins are forgiven her because she has loved much. Yet, we know how severe her penance was. We must, therefore, do penance ; consequently, we ought to embrace with a holy joy, poverty, mortifications, privations, sufferings, humiliations, contradictions ; and consider ourselves happy that God is pleased to give us occasions of satisfying His justice. Ah ! Lord, my sins have surpassed in number the hairs of my head. From this moment, I will devote myself to do penance for them ; I will think of my sins in the bitterness of my soul ; I will destroy this self-will which has been the source of all my wanderings ; but, above all, I will strive, henceforth, to avoid sin ; and not only will I eradicate it from my own heart, but I shall do all in my power to destroy it in others ; by so doing, to repair the faults which I have had the misfortune of committing.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Venial Sin.

FIRST POINT. *Venial sin in itself.*—Venial sin is commonly considered as a trifling matter ; but, if we well understood the nature of it, we would judge

quite otherwise, and would take every precaution to avoid it. . . . How small soever the sin, it is always an offense to God. In committing it, we displease God; not that we break absolutely with Him, but we do what we know will create a coolness between God and the soul. We do not extinguish the Holy Spirit within us, but we grieve Him. Therefore, since venial sin is an offense against God, we should fear it more than all the temporal evils that could fall upon us. For the smallest evil in regard to God, infinitely surpasses all the evil that regards only the creature. How light soever the sin be, there is no possible reason which could sanction the commission of it, unless it should cease to be sinful. Should there even be question of converting and saving the whole world, God would not have this effected, at the expense of the smallest lie; He would consider Himself offended, notwithstanding the good operated. Should we even procure God all possible glory, He would not wish this glory on such a condition. He will have us even abandon the care of His glory, rather than commit the least sin.—How light soever we suppose a sin to be, it is of faith, that it will never enter with us, nor we with it, into the kingdom of heaven: for nothing defiled shall ever be admitted into this heavenly abode. Even should we be otherwise laden with merits, all these merits and all the sanctity we may have acquired, will be in vain, if, on departing this life, our soul bears the stain of one venial sin which has

not been expiated by penance : this alone would be an obstacle to our beatitude and to the possession of God. It would be requisite that the soul, although just, holy, predestined, and worthy of God, should remain separated from Him until this sin be expiated.

SECOND POINT. *Venial Sin in Sisters of Charity.*

- —A Sister of Charity who voluntarily commits venial sin, is far more guilty than a person of the world, because she has received more light and grace to preserve herself from it. In her spiritual readings and in her meditations, she is continually reminded of the obligation of avoiding all that offends God ; hence, she cannot plead ignorance, forgetfulness, or inadvertence ; she sins, consequently, with full consciousness of the evil, and despite the remorse of her conscience. Moreover, how many means does she not find in her exercises of piety, and in the practice of our Holy Rules, to help her to avoid sin ! What a difference between her condition and that of persons in the world !

2. St. Vincent tells us, that the first end which a Daughter of Charity should propose to herself, is to love God in the highest degree. O my God, what an end ! But, is there anything more opposed to this end than an affection for sin, whatever it be ? How can I say that I love God in a sovereign degree, if He does not reign absolutely in my heart ? And how can I flatter myself that He reigns absolutely in my heart, when I wilfully and frequently commit faults that displease Him ? Can I say that I do

what is agreeable to God when I yield to so much dissipation of mind, to so many negligences in my office, to so many infractions of my Holy Rules; when, instead of seeking His glory in all my actions, I seek only myself? O my God, how could I believe that I love Thee in the highest possible degree, when I perceive in myself that multitude of little passions which, like tyrants, rule over my heart! Ah! Lord, drive out these usurpers who have taken possession of my heart over which Thou only shouldst reign.

3. A Sister of Charity ought to labor at her perfection: this is a duty, an indispensable obligation for her. But how can I say I have a desire for my perfection, if I render myself guilty of so many faults! The first disposition for attaining perfection, is to endeavor to free ourselves from our defects, and to entertain a horror for all kinds of sin. If we are not in this disposition, it is impossible for us to advance in virtue. Voluntary sins are so many chains that withhold us and prevent us from tending to perfection.

O my God, I now take the resolution to watch more attentively over myself henceforward; and to struggle against my defects with more generosity than I have exercised during the past.

THIRD POINT. *Venial sin in its effects.*—First, it diminishes and destroys the beauty of the soul, so that it is no longer the object of God's complacency as heretofore; but, it becomes in His sight an object of disgust; true, it is not dead, but its presence is

insupportable to Him. A single stain upon the soul, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, is a thousand times more loathsome than the most disgusting wounds of the body. Hence, there is a coldness between God and the soul; it no longer receives those sweet communications which once were a consolation, a thousand times more delicious than all the joys of the world. We often complain of the aridity we experience in the service of God; we would do better to humble ourselves profoundly, and acknowledge that our faults are the cause of it. If you wish God to treat you as a Father, show that you are His child; if you wish to have part in the favors of the divine Spouse, show that you are His spouse.

But what is still more alarming in regard to venial sin, is, that it insensibly leads to mortal sin. It is like a spark, which having been neglected, causes, at last, a fearful conflagration; it may be compared to a slight indisposition which, though inconsiderable in the beginning, finally becomes mortal, because there was not a timely application of remedies. "He who despises small things," says the Holy Spirit, "shall fall by little and little." And has not Jesus Christ told us, that "He who is unfaithful in small things, will be unfaithful in greater?"

O my God, my Saviour, I sincerely implore Thee to pardon so much baseness and negligence on my part, by which I have rendered myself guilty in Thy service. I beseech Thee to forget all my past ingratitude; and I promise, for the future, to make

every effort to repair, by my fervor, the evil I have done. Is it not enough, my divine Saviour, that Thou art offended by so many sinners who know Thee not? Must Thou, likewise, have the grief to see Thy Daughters, Thy spouses, turn against Thee? Ah! suffer it not; but grant that by Thy grace, we may give Thee all the consolation which Thou hast a right to expect from us.

CONSIDERATION.

On Prayer.

FIRST POINT. *Motives which induce us to Pray.*—

1. The excellence of Prayer. What an honor to be able to entertain ourselves with the King of kings; to offer Him our homage, to pay Him our respect, and ask Him for whatever we need! By prayer, we, in some measure, prelude here below those holy exercises which will occupy us during all eternity; namely, loving, praising, and blessing God. Consequently, what a motive to induce us to perform this duty with attention and fervor!

2. Necessity of Prayer. Our Lord declares that without Him we can do nothing; that His grace is indispensable that we may avoid sin and do good. For this reason He tells us in another place, that we must pray always, and never cease. Remark well the words *we must*, which signify that prayer is not only useful, but absolutely necessary. We must pray

always ; that is, to the end of life, because we shall always have faults to overcome, enemies to vanquish ; and we cannot succeed in this, without the assistance of grace ; and this grace we shall obtain by prayer. We see, therefore, that our salvation depends on prayer.

3. Advantages of Prayer. Jesus Christ Himself designates these precious advantages in His Gospel : “All that you ask the Father in my name,” says He, “He will give it to you.” All that you ask ; yes, all without exception, will be given to you. Could promises be more magnificent or consoling ? And who is it that uses this language ? Jesus Christ, Himself, who cannot deceive us. He shows us that prayer is all-powerful ; that it is the key to all heavenly treasures, and that it only remains for us to enrich ourselves with these treasures if we desire them. It is also by prayer, that we shall obtain the grace to move and convert sinners ; it will give efficacy to our words, and sanctify souls. If we do not have recourse to God, we shall never be qualified to discharge the functions allotted to us ; we shall labor alone, the grace of God will not be with us.

See how many reasons we have to pray well, and how fatal may be the consequences of our negligence, since it would prevent all the good we might do. Let us ask of God the grace to understand the importance of acquitting ourselves well of this holy exercise.

SECOND POINT. *The Qualities of Prayer.*—1. The spirit of faith. This is one of the most essential

conditions of prayer ; and the Apostle, St. James, tells us, that God will not hear our prayer if we are not animated by this spirit of faith ; and Jesus Christ teaches us that, if we pray with faith, we shall obtain all that we ask.

2. Humility. God resists the proud, but gives His grace to the humble. The prayer of him who humbles himself, shall pierce the clouds, and draw upon him the most abundant graces. We see a striking example of this in the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican : both went up to the temple to pray ; the Pharisee prays with pride, and his prayer is rejected ; the Publican, although a great sinner, humbles himself before God, and returns to his house justified.

3. Respect : the Sovereign Majesty of God, whom we address, demands this. If we speak to a great personage, should it be only a word, we do so with profound respect ; and before Thee, O infinite Majesty, the force of habit, routine, and inattention, often cause us to lose all respect, interior and exterior, so far as not even to think of what we say ! Henceforth, let us pray with much gravity and deliberation, pronouncing the words so that the mind may understand and relish them ; this is specially desirable in those who are appointed to say prayers aloud for the Community.

4. Fervor : that is, we should pray with continued attention,—guarding against distractions, banishing them as soon as we are conscious of them ;

fervor, also, implies love: for the heart, rather than the lips, should pray; also, an ardent desire of obtaining the graces which we solicit, for Jesus Christ teaches us that “blessed are they who hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.”

Let us examine before God in what manner we perform our prayers, and see what we have to correct.

THIRD POINT. *Means of Praying well.*—The first means is, to ask this grace of God; for, of ourselves, says the Apostle, St. Paul, we know not how to pray. Address yourself often to Jesus Christ, our divine Saviour, and say to Him with the Apostles: “Lord, teach us to pray.”

The second means is, to prepare well before prayer, in order to enter into the dispositions which God demands of us. The Holy Spirit Himself recommends this practice: “Before prayer,” says He, “prepare thy soul, lest thou be as one who comes to tempt God.” But in what does this preparation consist? It consists in recollecting yourself, placing yourself in the presence of God, reanimating the spirit of faith, considering the holiness of the action which you are about to perform; exciting yourself to great confidence in God, calling to mind His goodness and His divine promises. When you make your prayer in a chapel where the Blessed Sacrament is preserved, would it be difficult to say to yourself: What house am I about to enter? Ah! it is the house of God, the palace of the great King! the place where He deigns to receive me with so much bounty, and where He

is so well disposed to shed His abundant graces upon me ! Oh ! with what respect should I enter it ! Represent to yourself this divine Saviour who regards you with love and benevolence ; who opens to you His adorable Heart, in order to shed upon you the treasures of His love. Oh ! if you were well penetrated with these thoughts, what sentiments of love and gratitude would fill your soul, whenever you have the happiness of coming into His holy presence ! Then your heart would dilate, tears of joy would flow from your eyes ; and far from finding the time long and wearisome which you spend at His feet, you would experience the most lively regret, on perceiving that the exercise was drawing to a close.

A third means, indispensably necessary to acquire the spirit of prayer, is, to think of God frequently during the day whilst engaged in your ordinary duties, and to elevate your heart to Him by fervent and frequent aspirations. There is nothing more efficacious in order to become interior, and to acquire facility in uniting yourself with God. For the masters of a spiritual life say, that we are such during prayer, as we are during the day ; if we are habitually united to God in our ordinary actions, we shall have no trouble to find Him in prayer, wherein we shall enjoy a sweet recollection ; but, if we are regardless of God in the course of our daily occupations, this disposition will accompany us to prayer ; and, consequently, we shall be deprived of that peace and repose so necessary to our union with God.

These are the principal means we should employ in order to acquit ourselves well of the holy exercise of prayer. If we are faithful in making use of them, we shall reap abundant fruit from our communications with God, who will graciously hear the petitions which, with so much fervor, we address to Him.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Tepidity.

FIRST POINT. *Marks of Tepidity.*—There is nothing more opposed to the spirit of our Vocation, than Tepidity; for a Daughter of Charity should have a heart all burning with love for God. There is nothing so much to be dreaded as Tepidity. But, by what marks may it be known? The following are some: A tepid soul wishes, it is true, to avoid mortal sin, but is little concerned about committing a great number of light faults: she makes little account of omitting her exercises of piety; and when she does apply to them, it is without preparation, without the desire of profiting by them, and with voluntary negligence, of which she accuses herself only through form.—A tepid soul has only disgust for the things of God, as prayer, meditation, reception of the Sacraments;—a voluntary disgust, at least, in the cause; a disgust that can be imputed to her cowardice—a disgust which she has failed to resist; and, consequently, a disgust very different from

the aridity which sometimes afflicts the fervent soul, causing her to grieve and lament. Not only does the tepid soul make no progress in virtue, but she daily falls back. Her passions acquire new strength, her faults multiply without measure; but this gives her no anxiety.—A tepid soul performs her actions without the spirit of faith, she thinks not of referring them to God; she seeks herself in all she does, instead of laboring for the glory of God; she lives in habitual dissipation, never entering into herself: she is immortified, gives full liberty to her eyes; walks without modesty, yields to the desire of hearing and seeing all sorts of frivolous and dangerous things; she criticises those who are more fervent than herself; ridicules them, and indulges a thousand sentiments of envy and jealousy against those who are successful in their undertakings; she renders herself guilty of many negligences in the practice of her Holy Rules, nor does she strive to correct herself. We could point out many other marks of Tepidity, but it would be useless; inasmuch as it is not necessary to have them all to constitute a state of Tepidity; any of these marks strongly characterized, would indicate a tepid soul.

Let us examine if we have not the misfortune of being in this state. O my God, it is but too true, that I have permitted myself to fall into Tepidity in Thy service. Oh! what a subject of confusion for me, who have so many motives to serve Thee with fervor and generosity! Is this what Thou

shouldst expect from me after all Thy liberality towards me? I ought to be all burning with love, and I find myself all coldness! Ah! do not permit me to remain any longer in a state so contrary to my obligations; invigorate my languor, fill my heart with the most generous sentiments; that, henceforth, I may serve Thee with all the fervor that should distinguish a true Sister of Charity.

SECOND POINT. *The deplorable state of a Tepid soul.*—1. She excites the disgust of Jesus Christ. Listen to the terrifying words which the divine Saviour addresses to her in the person of the Bishop of Laodicea: "Because thou art lukewarm, I will begin to vomit thee out of my mouth." Our Lord had no horror of sinners; He sought them with eagerness to bring them back to God; He received them with compassion, readily pardoning the wanderings of their past life. But, when there is question of a tepid soul, how different His conduct, how changed His language! He declares that He is ready to vomit her out of His mouth. Oh! how clearly do these words reveal the horror of Jesus for Tepidity! The tepid soul inspires Him with a nausea similar to that produced in the stomach of a sick person, by heavy food which he is forced to reject. This soul, however, not having entirely abandoned God, must be endured by Jesus; but she is a burden upon His Heart, causing a renewal of His Passion. O Jesus, how could I treat Thee thus?

2. The tepid soul is exposed to the danger of falling into the abyss of mortal sin, and of falling into it, without clearly perceiving it. The Holy Spirit says in express terms: "He who despises small things, shall fall by little and little." Ah! the tepid soul, undoubtedly, despises small things: how many faults she voluntarily commits! or falls into them in consequence of habitual negligence. She will, then, fall; Eternal Truth has said it, and daily experience confirms this prophecy. She will fall: that is, she will commit some serious fault which will separate her entirely from God, and subject her to the slavery of the demon. What a misfortune! and what should she not do to avoid it, even should it happen but once in her life! But, what is still more alarming, is, that after falling into this state, the soul is exposed to the danger of not rising from it. For the Holy Ghost says, that she will fall little by little, and without much remorse, because of the habit she has contracted of acting against the voice of conscience; and of the gradual and almost imperceptible progress she has made, in the path of sin. For this reason our Lord says to the Bishop of Laodicea: "Thou art neither cold nor hot; would that thou wert cold or hot!" What a fearful sentence, but yet, how true! It would, indeed, be much better for certain souls, had they fallen into some grievous sin, rather than into this tepid and careless state; for they would not long have endured the remorse of their conscience.

This sin, in humbling and terrifying them by its enormity, would have compelled them to return to the path of duty; whereas, their tepidity excites no alarm. O my God, if I am in this unhappy state, what should I not do to arise from it! 3. The tepid soul is not happy. She falls under this terrible anathema: "Cursed is he who doth the work of the Lord negligently." How is it possible for her to taste the sweetness of God's service, when she is so unfaithful? She cannot enjoy the false pleasures of the world, for her Vocation debars her therefrom. If she enters into herself, she finds only subjects of weariness and disgust; everything is burdensome to her: constantly obliged to attend exercises of piety for which she has no relish, or to engage in painful labors which appear to her as a rigorous slavery, because they are performed without the love of God. Ah! it is indeed true, that the tepid soul is not happy. Oh! my God, I know this from my own experience; but I now return to Thee, acknowledging that Thou alone canst fill the void in my heart. From this moment I resolve to abandon Thee no more. O Jesus, grant me this grace which I implore, through the intercession of Mary Immaculate.

THIRD POINT. *Means of arising from the state of Tepidity and of avoiding it.*—As the causes of my Tepidity are: contempt of little things, negligence in exercises of piety, and the want of mortification, the means I must adopt to arise from this

unhappy state, consequently, are: 1. Lively horror for small faults, and fidelity to little things; 2. Exactitude in performing my exercises of piety, and attention to perform them well; 3. The spirit of mortification.

1. I should have a great horror of the smallest faults; hence, I resolve to avoid levity and dissipation of mind; all murmuring and detraction, the habit of which I have contracted . . .; but, above all, I will be faithful in observing my Holy Rules, for there is no means so conducive to the avoidance of small faults.

2. The second means, is, exactitude in my exercises of piety, and attention to perform them well; for, in these exercises, I shall find grace to avoid evil, and to do good. And, as long as I shall be faithful in the discharge of these sacred duties, God will bestow abundant grace upon me; I shall be strong against the enemies of my salvation, and shall be animated with great generosity in undertaking whatever God may require of me.

3. The third means, is, the practice of mortification. Nothing imparts more energy to the soul than the exercise of this virtue; and, without it, we shall always be deficient in courage and vigor. Therefore, I resolve to allow no day to pass without performing, at least, two or three acts of mortification. But, let us be convinced that there is no means more powerful to withdraw us from a state of Tepidity than a Retreat well made. We must,

then, endeavor to make the present one in the best manner possible, and neglect nothing that may insure its success. O my God, it is time to arise from this languor, which has endangered my salvation; rekindle in my heart the fire of divine love, which is almost extinguished. Grant that I may live as a good Sister of Charity, that my sentiments and my conduct may not be in contradiction with the beautiful name Thou hast given me; may I be in Thy presence as a burning and shining light: burning by the flames of charity, and shining by the lustre of my virtues. O my Saviour, grant to us all, the grace to reanimate our languishing fervor; may our hearts never cease to love Thee, that our beautiful name may not, one day, be our condemnation. This is the resolution we take to-day; but, to carry it into execution, we have need of Thy grace; shed it, then, abundantly upon our hearts, that henceforth, we may be able to say with Thy Prophet: "I have run in the way of Thy commandments, when Thou didst dilate my heart."

THIRD DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Preparation for Death.

FIRST POINT. *Necessity of preparing for Death.*
—We must prepare for Death, because upon it depends eternity. If we die well, heaven will become our portion; but if we die badly, we shall be condemned without hope of mercy, for we can die but once. If we could die more than once, we might repair a second or third time what had been badly done the first. If, then, we have the misfortune to die badly once, all is lost for us.—2. We must prepare for Death without delay, that we may not be surprised. Nothing is more fragile than our life. Our days pass as a shadow and return no more. Let us not say: I am still young, I enjoy good health. Death makes no reckoning with youth or health. “Watch,” says the Son of God; “be ready, for you know not the day nor the hour.” And elsewhere He adds: “The day of the Lord will come upon you like a thief.” Let us carefully note the words: shall come as a thief.—3. We must prepare for Death; for when the hour of departure comes, there will be no time for preparation; and when once the last sigh is given, there will be no means of obtaining pardon of our faults, if we

have not expiated them by sincere repentance. Would you be willing to die now?

Let us examine well, and if we have reason to fear the judgments of God, let us firmly resolve to prepare for the future; let us do now, what we would wish at the hour of Death, to have done. Now we can do this, and never shall we find a better occasion, for there is no means more efficacious for reclaiming a soul than a Retreat. O Jesus, do not permit us any longer to abuse the graces Thou hast granted us; may we no longer persevere in negligence which would prove so fatal to us.

SECOND POINT. *How unhappy the Death of a Sister of Charity who has lived in tepidity.*—Her heart is a prey to the most bitter anguish at the sight of the past, of the present, and of the future. What does she see in the past but the abuse she has made of God's grace; she remembers that multitude of infidelities of which she has rendered herself guilty; her negligence in her practices of piety; her frequent infractions of Rule, her disobedience, her little charity; the sacred vows she made at the foot of the holy Altar, and which she has often broken; and so many other faults multiplied almost to infinity, because she lived in habitual dissipation.—For the present, she sees that Death is about to give the last stroke, and that it is no time to prepare to live well, when we should be ready to die well.—In the future, she considers the judgments of God awaiting her, and she knows not whether they will be favorable or un-

favorable ; all that she knows is, that she has everything to fear after the relaxed life she has led. During the day, her mind is assailed by continual fears ; at night, her imagination is haunted by most frightful dreams. The demon watches near to drive her to despair ; he places her faults before her, and exaggerates the number and malice of them, to entirely discourage her. Who could recount all that passes in that soul in these last moments ? Oh ! how bitter are the fruits of tepidity and negligence !

But what will become of that poor soul ? Will she be saved ? Will she be damned ? She knows nothing. What a terrible uncertainty ! O my God ! What cause would I not have to fear, were I to die now ! The more I reflect on my life, the more clearly I see how far I am from the perfection Thou demandest of me ; not that means are wanting, for Thou hast lavished them on me with unparalleled generosity. What would become of me were I to continue in such negligence ! Ah ! Lord, I resolve from this moment to renounce my cowardice, and give myself to Thee to live as a good and perfect Daughter of Charity ; and I hope to do so, being strengthened by Thy grace, and encouraged by the example of so many companions who faithfully serve Thee.

THIRD POINT. *How should we prepare for Death.*—1. To prepare for Death, we must, during life, die to all that of which Death will deprive us. Death will take from us the use of our senses ; ah !

well, mortification must regulate them in such a manner, that they may be as dead to all that could become an occasion of sin to us. Death will despoil us of the goods and honors of earth ; we must commence by detaching our hearts entirely from them and establish ourselves in poverty and humility. Death will separate us from our dearest friends ; we must, therefore, renounce those friendships, perhaps, too human, even for our companions.

2. To prepare for Death, we must lead a holy life ; and to die a good Sister of Charity, we must live as such. "A man," says St. Paul, "will gather only what he shall have sown." If a man sow only cockle in his field, can he complain if he gather only cockle ? Let us, then, say with St. Augustine : "I wish to live in the arms of my Saviour, that I may die therein."

3. If we wish to die in a holy manner, let us frequently think of Death. Oh ! how salutary is the thought of Death, and how differently would we live, did we reflect often upon it ! We must, then, always bear in mind that we may die at any moment. We must think of this in the morning when we rise, and say : This is, perhaps, the last day of my life, how then should I spend it ? In the evening on retiring, you should say to yourself : Who knows but I may die to-night ; ah ! perhaps, I shall awake before the tribunal of God ! Think of Death before each of your actions ; this was one of the practices of St. Bernard ; he was accustomed to say to himself :

“If I should die immediately after this action would I perform it, and in what manner?” Think of Death when you have some painful sacrifice to make, or when some trial overtakes you. Above all, think of it during this Retreat, and say: O my God! is not this the last Retreat I shall ever make; I must then, make it as if it were the last. I must reform all that displeases Thee in me, and prepare to die well. O blessed St. Joseph, who hadst the happiness of dying in the arms of Jesus and Mary, obtain that we may be always faithful in serving Jesus Christ in His members; that, one day, like thee, we may die the death of the just.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Particular Judgment.

FIRST POINT. *The Particular Judgment is terrible on account of the severity of the Judge.*—After death follows Judgment; that is, the very moment that my soul leaves the body, it will appear before the tribunal of God, and be presented to Him as to her Judge. Therefore, in what place soever it be, I shall no sooner have drawn my last breath, than I shall be in presence of the infinite God. I shall not see God; but, without manifesting Himself to my senses, He will impress me deeply with the consciousness of His Majesty. I shall be there for judgment, and God will be my Judge.

Oh ! how terrible will be His severity ! A judge is reputed severe and formidable when, being fully enlightened, he is disposed to punish according to the rigors of justice ; and when he is so inexorable that nothing can move him. Such is the Judge who is to decide my eternal destiny : 1. He is infinitely enlightened ; nothing is hidden from Him ; He knows all, He penetrates even the most secret folds of the conscience,—all things are unveiled before Him ; He sounds the reins and the heart.

2. This Judge will be disposed to punish the guilty according to the rigors of His justice. It will be no longer the mild and merciful Jesus, the God of love and goodness ; it will be no longer the good pastor who seeks the wandering sheep, who wearies Himself to find it ; and who, after having found it, places it upon His shoulders and carries it back to the fold ; it will be no longer the good shepherd who gives His life for the sheep so dear to Him ; but it will be a severe Judge, who will demand an account of my life ; and His severity will be in proportion to the mercy He has extended to me ; the time of mercy will have passed ; the time of justice, and the most rigorous justice, has come.

3. The Judge will be inexorable : He will not be softened by the tears of the guilty,—those tears which so move His heart now, will be fruitless then. It will be a Judge whom we shall have outraged a thousand times during the course of our life ; and He will come to us full of wrath and

anger, as the Holy Spirit tells us. What will become of me when I shall appear before this inexorable Judge? In vain shall I think to flee from before His face: He will hold me in His hand; and when we have fallen into the hands of the living God, we cannot escape. In vain shall I rely upon the help of others. To whom could I appeal, being alone with God? My companions will gather around my body, to render certain honors and to testify their regret; they will offer suffrages and prayers for me; but will these prayers and suffrages be a source of comfort to my soul if they are not supported by the merits and holiness of my life? I shall, then, find myself at this terrible moment, abandoned to God and to myself: to God, on whom my destiny for eternity depends, and who is on the point of deciding it;—to myself, deprived of all succor, in utter destitution, having with me only my works, which will be my sole resource and support. What will become of me if this resource fail me, and how could I supply it?

O my God, give me to understand all the terror of this Judgment, that I may avoid the rigor thereof by salutary penance. Yes, O my soul, thou must do penance if thou wouldst escape the justice of God; hasten, then, to profit by the time which He gives thee to weep for thy sins, and do not delay until the day of justice overtakes thee.

SECOND POINT. *The Particular Judgment is terrible because of the rigorous account we shall have*

to render.—A book will be placed before us containing the entire history of our life,—nothing will be forgotten. The faults which we have committed in public, and by which we have scandalized our neighbor; those of which we have been guilty in private; even the most secret thoughts will be there described in the minutest detail. A light will be thrown over the whole of our life, and all will be exposed as at noon-day; we shall be examined as creatures of God, as Christians, as Sisters of Charity.

1. As creatures of God, we shall be asked an account of all the gifts of God: of the use we have made of our memory, understanding, and will; whether we have preserved within us the image of the Divinity which the Creator of all things impressed upon us in our creation, or if we have not degraded the work of God by sin; if we have respected our bodies as the temples of the Holy Spirit, or if we have profaned them. Wo, wo, on that day to those who will have committed sin, and will not have blotted it out by penance!

2. As Christians, we shall be examined upon the obligations which we contracted on the day of our Baptism; wo to us, if we have been unfaithful to our engagements! We shall be examined also upon all the graces we have received by the use of the Sacraments, by the dispensation of the word of God, by holy readings, good example, and so many other means employed by God to impart His graces to us.

What will be our grief, if God then shows us, that we have only abused His divine favors !

3. We shall be examined as Sisters of Charity. God will then make us understand the value of the grace which He bestowed upon us, in calling us to so exalted a Vocation, and He will make us sensible of its obligations. Wo to those who will have abandoned their Vocation, who will present themselves divested of their holy Habit before the tribunal of God ! Wo to those who, although preserving their holy Habit, will not have preserved the spirit of their state ; who will have neglected their Holy Rules ;—who will have been unfaithful to poverty, chastity, obedience, and the service of the poor ! they will then remember the words of St. Paul : God will not be mocked ; and also what he says elsewhere : It is a terrible thing to fall into the hands of the living God !

While there is yet time, let us examine attentively before God, those points upon which we have most cause to dread the divine justice, and let us put our conscience in order without delay.

THIRD POINT. *The Particular Judgment is terrible on account of the sentence pronounced against the sinner.*—After the investigation of conscience will have been made, Jesus Christ will pronounce the sentence. This will be a sentence of benediction for those who will have loved and served God upon earth, but a sentence of malediction for those who will have lived only to outrage Him. Oh ! how

great, then, will be the difference between a good Sister of Charity and one who will have been unfaithful to her Vocation ! While one will mount to heaven to see and possess God eternally, the other will descend to hell to expiate her sins for which she was unwilling to do penance ; while one will eternally sing canticles of joy and happiness in heaven, the other will make hell resound with cries of rage and despair.

But, what will be your sentence ? Will it be one of benediction or of reprobation ? That depends upon yourself ; it only remains for you to choose. You have before you death and life, benediction and malediction. Which will you choose ? You will be in the number of the reprobate, if you walk in the broad way which, as our divine Saviour tells us, leads to perdition. But if you wish, on the contrary, to be in the number of the elect, you must follow the narrow path, do violence to yourself, and bring forth worthy fruits of penance. First, you must put an end to your infidelities : you must have the greatest horror for mortal and even for venial sin ; because, if we have no abhorrence for this, we shall soon be drawn into mortal sin. Now, what are those worthy fruits of penance ? Must you embrace great austerities, arm yourself with disciplines, hair-cloth, and fast daily on bread and water ? No ;—the Lord does not require this of you. Endeavor only to do faithfully whatever your duty demands ; serve the poor well ; be deferential and respectful

towards your Superiors, mild and cordial towards your companions; walk in humility and simplicity; be exact in the observance of your Holy Rules, and you will not have to dread the awful sentence which will cast the reprobate into hell.

O my divine Saviour, how terrible are Thy judgments! The greatest Saints were penetrated with fear when they considered them. I hear the holy man Job cry out: "Ah! wo to me, what shall become of me, when the Lord shall rise up to judge me?" Alas! what cause have I not to fear,—I who have so often offended Thee, and who, perhaps, have as yet done nothing to satisfy Thy justice? I have sinned, O Lord, I have sinned; I have merited the rigor of Thy judgments. But, O my divine Saviour, I wish, henceforth, never to offend Thee; and from this moment, I renounce everything that has been the cause of my infidelities; I desire only to please Thee and to do Thy will in all things. Therefore, I hope Thou wilt be merciful to me.

CONSIDERATION.

On General Confessions.

FIRST POINT. *General Confessions are sometimes necessary.*—Consider the infinite mercy of God who has instituted the Sacrament of Penance for the remission of sins, how enormous and multiplied soever they be. What gratitude do we not owe to God

for so great a benefit! By the Sacrament of Penance, we recover our first innocence; our soul is reconciled to God; we regain His friendship, and acquire new rights to our celestial inheritance. In this Sacrament, we receive particular graces to aid us in avoiding sin. But, alas! how many abuse this great mercy of God! Are you not of this number? Have you not to reproach yourself with many negligences, and are they not of serious import? If so, you must absolutely quit this state, and you can do so only by a General Confession.

But, for whom are these General Confessions necessary? They are necessary, 1. For those who, through shame, or any other sinful motive, have concealed a mortal sin in confession.—2. A General Confession is necessary for those who have not brought to the tribunal of Penance the requisite contrition; that is, who had no sorrow for having offended God mortally, and no firm purpose to avoid serious faults. Now, if any one frequently relapses into the same mortal sins, if there is no sensible amendment in his conduct, it is to be feared that he does not make his confessions with the necessary dispositions, although he may not be wanting in sincerity in the accusation of his sins.—3. A General Confession is necessary for those who, through wilful and culpable negligence, fall into illusions which prevent them from perceiving the serious faults they commit: for example, certain illusions with regard to poverty, obedience, service

of the poor, but, above all, with regard to chastity: for instance, here is one who voluntarily maintains a particular and human friendship. Such attachments are very dangerous; they often lead to the most fatal results, and conduct by a rapid descent to the abyss of mortal sin. The soul is aware of this, and yet, she does not avoid the occasion; she says nothing of it in confession; or, if she mentions it, she perseveres in the same course, notwithstanding the remonstrances of her confessor, and she communicates in this state. How can she be tranquil? Is it not to be feared that all confessions made in these dispositions are null, and, perhaps, sacrilegious? Therefore, they should be rectified during the Retreat.—In fine, all who have made bad confessions are obliged to repair them by a General Confession.

But, that scrupulous persons may not take occasion from what we have just said, to torment themselves unnecessarily, we shall add, that it is not for them we speak; and that when one who has had doubts with regard to past confessions, opens his heart to a confessor, and explains the cause of his alarm, he should abide by the decision of God's minister. But, if scrupulous persons should avoid this useless anxiety, those who have lived in a state of negligence and relaxation, have reason to fear being deceived by the demon, or by self-love, which sometimes persuades them that they have no cause of alarm; whereas, they are in a very

bad state. Let us reflect seriously on the above; if our conscience reproaches us with nothing, let us return most humble thanks to God for preserving us from so great a misfortune; but, if we are not tranquil, let us endeavor to recover our peace of mind, by speedily having recourse to the means which God, in His great mercy, has given us.

SECOND POINT. *Reviews, or extraordinary Confessions, even when not necessary, procure us precious advantages.*—It is not without reason that St. Vincent recommends monthly reviews to all the Daughters of Charity residing in Paris, and one every three months for those in the Provinces; and, besides this, for all the Sisters, a review at the period of the Annual Retreat. These reviews procure the most precious advantages.

The first advantage, is, to repair the negligences that may have glided into past confessions; for, alas! we often confess with very imperfect dispositions.

The second advantage, is, joy and peace of soul. What a consolation to be able to say: I have done all that depended on me to make this review well; I should, then, have the sweet confidence that I am in the friendship of God; and should I die, I would not have to dread the rigor of His judgments!

A third advantage of these confessions when they are well made, is, to impart new light which discloses to us the true state of our soul: whether we have advanced or gone back. In ordinary con-

fessions, we are not alarmed at our faults, because we do not see them in a body ; but, in an extraordinary confession we see them in a mass, and we understand all we have to dread from a life filled with negligences.

A fourth advantage, no less precious, is, to excite within us a lively sorrow for our sins. In ordinary confessions, our isolated faults make but little impression upon us ; but, in preparing a review, we perceive that our life is a tissue of ingratitude, of falls and relapses, of promises and infidelities : then the soul becomes sensible of her guilt ; she begins in earnest to reproach herself for her past ingratitude ; compunction penetrates the heart ; she is filled with sincere regret, tears flow from her eyes,—those tears which St. Augustine found so sweet,—which have such power to move the heart of God, and so much efficacy to wash away the stains of our soul and heal its wounds. Experience proves that, frequently, persons who, at first, undertook these confessions only from devotion, afterwards perceived they were necessary, in consequence of a want of requisite contrition for their sins. Oh ! how they then blessed God for having inspired them with the thought of making these confessions ! How they congratulated themselves for having had the courage to surmount their repugnances !

THIRD POINT. *How the Confession of the Retreat should be made.*—1. You must, above all, conceive an earnest desire to make this confession well, and pray fervently to God to obtain this grace.

2. After that, take the necessary time to examine your conscience. I say the necessary time, for you must avoid spending entire hours in the minute investigation of the lightest faults. Confine yourself, rather, to reflecting upon your principal faults ; consider the source and consequences of them. Consider, above all, your predominant fault, for upon this subject, it is extremely easy to be deceived. Examine yourself also upon those faults with which your Superiors and companions reproach you : depend on the testimony of others rather than on your own. Judge yourself without partiality, prejudice, or tenderness. The more severe you will be to yourself, the more mildly will you be treated by the Sovereign Judge of the living and the dead. This is what the Apostle, St. Paul, teaches when he says : "If we know how to judge ourselves, we would not be judged one day." In proportion as your sins present themselves to your mind, conceive great horror for them.

3. After the examination, you must excite yourself to a lively and sincere sorrow for your transgressions : it is not sufficient to desire this sorrow, you must have it. To this effect, transport yourself in spirit to Calvary, or meditate attentively upon your Crucifix, and see how much those sins which you so easily commit, have cost your God.

4. After you have made a careful examination and excited yourself to contrition, go to the tribunal of Penance. Consider your confessor as Jesus Christ,

Himself, and present yourself before him as the prodigal child when he cast himself at the feet of his father ; or, as Magdalen bedewing the feet of our divine Saviour with her tears. Tell your sins simply, with profound humility, and great sincerity. Listen to the advice which your confessor gives you, as you would listen to Jesus Christ Himself. When the priest gives you absolution, renew your act of contrition ; and humbling yourself profoundly, reflect that, at this solemn moment, the Blood of Jesus Christ is flowing upon your soul to cleanse it.

5. After confession, testify your gratitude to God for the great mercy exercised in your regard ; and protest to Him anew, that you sincerely wish to renounce sin, and to serve Him faithfully for the time to come.

Oh ! how happy you will be if you make your confession in this manner ; it will produce in your soul all the effects for which our divine Saviour instituted this Sacrament. Let it serve you as a model for all the confessions you will make, henceforth, that they may secure to you great purity of conscience, and obtain for you a participation in that benediction which God promises in His Gospel, when He says : Blessed are the clean of heart, for they shall see God.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Hell.

FIRST POINT. *The pain of Damnation, or of eternal separation from God.*—In order to form a correct idea of the severity of this punishment, it would be necessary to comprehend the infinite perfections of God, and the unspeakable ardor with which a soul, separated from her God, seeks to be united to Him who is her first Beginning and her last End. God so far transcends all we can imagine, that there are no terms capable of expressing the extent of the loss a soul sustains, in being absolutely separated from Him. Here below, the sinner, although not united to his God, does not suffer this torture ; because his soul is confined within the body, and beguiled by the pleasures of the senses. But, as soon as the soul severs the chains that hold her captive, she rushes violently towards God as to her centre and her last end. Her desire is vehement, irresistible, because it is a necessity of her being. As a creature, she tends imperatively to her Creator ; as a sinner, she is forcibly repulsed by divine justice. She rushes towards God, but a powerful hand keeps her fastened to the bottom of hell ; she seeks to break her chains, but never will she be able to escape from that place of anguish and desolation. She has lost her God, and she has lost Him forever ! In this state of violence she will pass her eternity : desiring

always what she will never attain, and enduring forever what she does not desire. What a horrible situation ! says St. Bernard. Can we imagine anything more heart-rending.

But, what is still more cruel for this soul, is the conviction that she has lost her God through her own fault. She will call to mind all that God had done for her salvation ; the numberless favors He had lavished upon her in her holy Vocation ; the good advices she received without profiting by them ; instructions, spiritual readings, good example, holy inspirations :—all which graces she abused. These words will continually resound in her ears : Thy perdition is from thyself ! And if this reprobate soul is a Daughter of Charity, the demons and the damned, astonished at finding her in hell, will say to her : What hast thou done to lose thyself ; thou to whom God had given a Vocation wherein it was so easy to work out thy salvation !—But, what will she do in hell ? She will shudder with rage and despair. Thus will she pass her eternity, while her former companions will be inebriated with the delights of heaven.

SECOND POINT. *The pain of Sense or fire.*—The principal instrument which divine justice will employ in hell to punish the sinner with the pain of sense, is fire : a fire enkindled by the wrath of an omnipotent God, and inconceivably more terrible in its effects than the fire of earth. What are the properties of this fire ? First, it seizes upon the condemned soul

in such a manner as never to abandon it ; a reprobate, a demon, carries it everywhere ; is entirely penetrated with it. The second property, is, to torment the sinner in proportion to his crimes ;—the third, is, to burn without brightness, and without consuming its victim, in order to torment the soul with greater horror, and to torment it forever ! All these are so many miracles of the infinite justice of God. What a frightful punishment to be cast, living, into a burning furnace enkindled by the terrible breath of God's justice ! to live and suffer therein forever ; to die therein, in some measure, and to revive at every moment ; in a word, to burn during all eternity.

Oh ! how great an evil is sin, since God, infinitely good as He is, can resolve to treat without any mercy, a creature made to His own image ! O my God, what a subject of meditation ! Oh ! the sovereign antidote against all sin ! Oh ! the admirable and efficacious means of preserving us in innocence ! Oh ! how well calculated is this fire, to enkindle in our hearts the fire of divine love ! Ah ! my Saviour, may we be consumed with this sacred fire which Thou didst bring upon earth ! This fire burned in the hearts of Thy friends ; and I hope, through Thy mercy, that I may burn therewith during this life, that I may not be condemned to burn, hereafter, with Thy enemies, in the fire of Thy justice.

THIRD POINT. *The Eternity of suffering.*—Hell is the place of torments, and these torments will last

forever ; they are universal in their extent, continual in their application ; and, to fill up the measure of their severity, they are eternal in duration : this is what faith teaches us, and this baffles all human reasoning. How great soever the pains of the damned, hell would cease to be hell, if, one day, these pains should end. But, to have incessantly before their minds this terrible certainty : I am here for all eternity ; and after the lapse of millions of ages I shall be here still, burning anew, as if this torture were but commencing ! This it is, that constitutes the hell of the damned ; and which will eternally constitute it.

O my God, preserve me from such a misfortune. But what must we do to avoid it? 1. We must apply ourselves to the faithful observance of our Holy Rules. It is an evident truth, that a Sister of Charity who will have observed them faithfully, will have nothing to dread from hell ; and heaven will, infallibly, be her inheritance. Oh ! what reason have we not to thank God for giving us such means of salvation, and what a motive to induce us to observe them !

2. The second means to avoid hell, is to think of it frequently : “Remember thy last end,” says the Holy Spirit, “and thou shalt never sin.” How, indeed, could we offend God, if we had before our mind those burning fires into which we may be cast at any moment ? Think, then, frequently of hell if you wish to avoid it.

3. The third means, is, to do penance. O my God, if at this moment Thou wouldst in Thy mercy, withdraw one of the damned souls from hell, on condition that she should do penance, with what sentiments of joy and gratitude would she not be penetrated ! How generously would she devote herself to do penance ! The greatest hardships, the most horrible macerations, the deepest humiliations, would appear sweet and agreeable. If Thou wouldst grant her a Retreat, as Thou dost me, oh ! how well she would profit by it, in order to give herself entirely to Thee ! Oh ! since Thou offerest me so great a grace, when I have rendered myself, by my numberless sins, so unworthy, it is done ; I will hesitate no longer, I wish only to live to do penance for my sins. When an occasion of suffering presents itself, I will think of the fire of hell which I have merited ; I will not cease to thank Thee, and to manifest my gratitude for all Thy mercies in my regard. Deign to strengthen my resolutions that I may prove faithful to Thee ; and, that after having sung Thy mercies on earth, I may eternally sing them in heaven.

FOURTH DAY.

Note.—The order of the subjects for the Fourth Day will be observed, even when the Communion is deferred until the Sixth Day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Penance.

FIRST POINT. *Necessity of doing Penance.*—We have sinned, we must, therefore, do Penance. In receiving Baptism, we were clothed with the spirit of God residing in Jesus Christ, as penitent; we are then obliged to a continual Penance. We have within us a tendency to evil, and this we must check by Penance, otherwise, it will cause our destruction. Again, we have to provide for the future, as well as to repair the past; consequently, our obligation of doing Penance lasts as long as our life. Even the sins that have been pardoned, have left a wound in our soul which must be healed,—a temporal debt to be discharged either in this world or in the next. We must do Penance daily, and fear the chastisements with which God threatens those who refuse to comply with this duty. And, although our Lord has fully satisfied the justice of His Father, we cannot say that He has thereby freed us from the obligation of doing Penance. Let us believe St. Paul who says: “I make up in my flesh what is wanting

in the Passion of Jesus Christ." Let us believe Jesus Christ, Himself, who says: "Unless you do Penance you shall all perish."

We must, then, do true Penance; not a false penance which effects no amendment of life. And this true Penance we must undertake without delay; we must commence it from this moment. We must not say: I see clearly that I cannot always remain in the state in which I am; I wish to amend, but I will wait a little longer. This is a snare of the devil who inspires the hope that you will accomplish later and with more facility, what you have not the courage to do at present. What seems difficult to us to-day, we imagine will be easier at a later period, although our passions will be stronger, and more deeply rooted. But, have we made a compact with death? Let us bear in mind that hell is filled with good desires, and that there is nothing upon which we can reckon less, than on time. Let us listen to the voice of God, and say to Him from our inmost heart: It is done, O Lord; I will no longer delay my entire conversion; behold me at Thy feet resolved from this moment to commence a new life; what wilt Thou have me to do?

SECOND POINT. *Advantages of Penance.*—These advantages are so precious, that if we knew how to appreciate them, we could not refrain from loving Penance, notwithstanding the repugnances of nature.

1. It shields us from the terrible chastisements of divine justice. We have sinned; consequently, we

must do Penance in this world or in the next. The pains of Purgatory exceed all that we can imagine; but, by the light penances we perform in this life, we can escape them, or at least, abridge their duration.

2. It restores peace of soul. When we have offended God, we tremble before the sword of His justice, for we know that we have to dread His punishments. But, if we frequently renew this sorrow for our faults; if we strive to do Penance, then our conscience will bear testimony that we are in friendship with God, since He has promised not to reject a contrite and humble heart.—3. Penance renders us agreeable to God. It is a second baptism; our soul thereby regains her first beauty, and resumes the precious robe of innocence which she had lost. Henceforth, God regards us as His dear children; we recover His favor, as well as our right to our celestial inheritance.—4. Another advantage of Penance, is, that it increases charity in the soul and leads us to high perfection. Whence was it that the heart of holy King David, that of St. Peter, of St. Augustine, of St. Mary Magdalen, and of so many others, were all burning with love? Because the remembrance of their sins, and the thought of the mercies of the Lord, were a stimulus which urged them to give themselves more perfectly to Him, and to serve Him with greater generosity.

O my Saviour, do not permit that I should ever lose the remembrance of my ingratitude, and of

the great mercy Thou hast exercised in my regard. May this remembrance follow me everywhere ; so that at all times and in all places, I may render due thanks to Thee for Thy great bounty. Give me the spirit of Penance which thou didst once bestow upon Magdalen ; that I may continually bewail my sins, and love Thee as I desire, and as Thou meritest to be loved.

THIRD POINT. *The qualities of Penance.*—Penance should be interior and sincere ; that is, it must consist in detesting sin, in sorrow for having committed it, and in a firm purpose to avoid it in future. How deep should be our sorrow, considering our base ingratitude to God who has been so good to us ! It was this thought that caused so many tears to flow from the eyes of Magdalen when she cast herself at the feet of Jesus, and washed them in torrents of grief. It was this thought which caused so many holy penitents to wage a rude war of maceration against their flesh.

3. Penance should be exterior ; that is, we must perform works painful to nature, in order to expiate our sins, and satisfy the justice of God, in undergoing the penalty even after the sin has been forgiven. "I chastise my body and reduce it to servitude," said St. Paul, although he was confirmed in grace. Other Saints have done in like manner, even such as had led a most innocent life. These expiatory works must consist, above all, in the accomplishment of our duties, how disagreeable soever these may

sometimes be. We are well aware, that the labors which our Vocation imposes upon us are often very painful. To offer these to God in expiation of our sins, is an excellent means of doing Penance. However, let us go farther than this : to this Penance imposed by duty, let us join other satisfactory works, which a spirit of generosity will not fail to prompt. Without speaking of extraordinary penances, which we can undertake only with permission of our Superiors, how many acts of penance may we not perform every day, without prejudice to our health, and without attracting the attention of others ! To observe strict modesty of the eyes, to deprive ourselves of a gratification otherwise lawful ; to impose a certain restraint upon our exterior ; to generously combat a temptation of antipathy, by manifesting greater cordiality towards those to whom we are less attracted ;—all these practices of Penance are constantly within our reach. Let us courageously embrace them ; this will maintain within us the spirit of penance.

3. Penance should be constant. Our entire life is given us to do Penance ; we should employ it in so doing, and labor till our last sigh to satisfy the justice of God. Oh ! what a happiness for us if we act in this manner ; what sweet consolation we shall enjoy during life, and, above all, at the hour of death, if we are faithful to it ! O my God, what cause have I not to humble myself in Thy presence, when I consider the numberless faults of which I have rendered myself guilty ! I do not merit to be

any longer in the number of Thy spouses ; yet, I dare raise my eyes to Thee, and I hope that I shall not be rejected ; I know that Thy mercy far exceeds my ingratitude. Behold me, Lord Jesus, at Thy feet, filled with grief and compunction. I offer Thee my heart ; it desires to give itself to Thee ; deign to accept it, and penetrate it with so lively a regret for its past faults, that it will never cease to deplore them. Give me grace to repair the time I have lost, and to profit so well by that which Thou wilt grant me, that I may continually increase in Thy love, until it be given to me to love Thee in the abode of Thy glory.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Prodigal Child.

FIRST POINT. *The wanderings of the Prodigal Child.*—He was happy in his father's house ; and suddenly, he asks to withdraw. What was the cause of such conduct ? First, a great desire of liberty. When we cease to love virtue, or when we wish to gratify our passions, we dread the presence of virtuous persons. The second cause, was, the love of forbidden pleasures. When the heart is perverted, we cannot enjoy the sweets of virtue.

Is not the conduct of this unfortunate Prodigal Child a prototype of our own ? Let us cast our eyes upon our past life. Have we not had the

misfortune of abandoning God in order to follow the bent of our passions? Ah! what a subject of tears and confusion for us! If we have to reproach ourselves with but one mortal sin, let us guard against thinking that an entire life would be too long to expiate it.—And since we entered the Community, have we not gone far from God, by our tepidity and negligence?

But what were the consequences of the wanderings of the Prodigal? The first was, to fill with sadness and bitterness the heart of his father, who was overwhelmed with grief at his departure. Thus, by your wanderings you have brought desolation to the Heart of God, your Father. Ah! who can tell how great the grief you caused Him? How could you forget what you owed to so good a Father!—What other consequences resulted from the wanderings of the Prodigal Child? He was happy in his father's house; he there tasted the sweets of a peaceful conscience. But what did he find in withdrawing from his father? Alas! he found only shame, hunger, and the greatest misery, instead of the happiness which his passions had promised him. Ah! what a misfortune when we forsake God! Have we not often had a sad experience of this? What did we gain by offending God? Bitter regret and confusion. How long will we permit ourselves to be seduced by hopes which have so often betrayed us? Ah! Jesus, I conjure Thee to make me comprehend how revolting my conduct

has been, for I feel that I do not yet know the extent of my ingratitude. Vouchsafe to make me sensible of it, that I may begin to deplore it in the bitterness of my soul.

SECOND POINT. *The Return of the Prodigal Child to his Father.*—Let us consider the motives that led this son to return to his father. First, he entered into himself; and, conscious of his extreme misery, he said: How many hired servants in my father's house abound in bread, and I here perish with hunger. If we desire to return to God, let us commence by entering into ourselves; then, reanimating our confidence, let us say like the Prodigal: I will arise and go to my Father; and immediately, following his example, let us arise and go to God. Yes, let us go to God, and let our first words be: Father, I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee; I am no longer worthy of being called Thy child, but receive me as one of Thy servants.—The certain mark of a true conversion, is regret for having offended God, accompanied with the avowal of our faults and the desire to expiate them by penance. We find these dispositions in the Prodigal Child. He resolves to confess his faults with sincerity and without excusing them; he will say: I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee. Not only is he willing to do penance, but he asks that this penance be severe and continual. From being a child of the family, he will become a servant.

May you imitate the promptitude and sincerity of the Prodigal Child's repentance! What could prevent you from returning sincerely to God and resuming your first fervor? Would it be the enormity, or the number of your sins? But, is not God infinitely merciful, and has He not promised pardon to the greatest sinners, if they come to Him with an humble and contrite heart? Do you fear the sacrifices which you will be obliged to make in order to change your life? But God will assist you; Mary will come to your succor; St. Vincent and your good companions now in heaven, are already offering their supplications to draw down upon you the benedictions of the Lord. Reanimate, then, your confidence, and say with all the assurance that grace will give you: I will arise and go to my Father. It is all over, O my God, I will no longer dispute with Thee a heart which should be all Thine. Ah! I have sinned against Heaven and before Thee, I am not worthy to be called Thy child, but receive me as the last of Thy servants; I shall esteem myself most happy to be received under that title. Henceforth, I will attach myself to Thee, as to my Sovereign Master and Lord. I devote myself to Thee, to love and serve Thee, and to repair my past infidelities.

THIRD POINT. *The tender Affection with which the Prodigal is received by his Father.*—The Prodigal was still a great way off, says the Gospel, when his father seeing him, was moved with compassion, and

running to him, fell upon his neck and kissed him. See the goodness of this father ; does it not seem as if he should reproach his son, to make him sensible of the baseness of his conduct ? Yet, not a word of bitterness proceeds from his mouth ; he manifests only the affection he bears him, and the joy he experiences on seeing him again. Thus does God receive us when we return to Him. Ah ! how many times have we not experienced this, after the most shameful ingratitude !

Scarcely has the father heard the humble confession of his repentant son, than he thus addresses his servants : Bring forth quickly the first robe and put it on him ; and put a ring on his finger and shoes on his feet ; and bring hither the fatted calf and kill it, and let us eat and make merry, because this my son was dead and is come to life again, was lost and is found ! This precious robe which the father orders for his son, is a figure of the robe of innocence with which we were clothed at our Baptism, but which we lost by our sins ; we are clothed with it anew when we return to God. The ring which the father caused to be placed on the finger of his son, is a symbol of the new alliance that he forms with him ; it is also a figure of the new alliance we contract with God when we return to Him. The shoes placed upon the feet of the Prodigal, signify the particular graces imparted by God to all who return to Him, to enable them to walk in the difficult and thorny path of virtue. In

fine, the feast, celebrated in mirth and joy, signifies the Eucharistic Banquet, at which the soul is inebriated with the sweetest delights.

O my God, I perceive now more clearly than ever, that Thy mercy is infinite. How guilty soever I be, I come to Thee with full and entire confidence; I am convinced that Thou wilt graciously receive me,—Thou art so tender a Father! But, should human frailty, which alas! is so great, withdraw me anew from Thee, recall to my mind Thy infinite mercies; that after having offended Thee, I may not fall into discouragement; but cast myself at once, into the arms of Thy mercy. O Mary, Refuge of sinners, obtain this grace for me.

CONSIDERATION.

On Contrition.

FIRST POINT. *Our Confession must be accompanied with Interior and Universal Contrition.*—1. Interior. Jesus Christ, that perfect model of penance in the Garden of Olives, clearly teaches us this: His Heart was so oppressed with grief for sin, that He was sorrowful even unto death. Moreover, reason alone convinces us of the necessity of this interior sorrow. Since the heart has offended God, the heart must repair the offense: it must be broken with grief for having displeased a God so good, so worthy of being loved. God cannot pardon

unless the heart repents, so far, as to wish, for all the world, not to have committed the fault it deploras. "Return to me from your heart, says God to sinners; rend your hearts; make to yourselves a new heart." God regards not the eyes that shed tears, nor the lips that pronounce the words, but the heart that sincerely abhors the sin committed. In vain, will the mind and the imagination form within us an idea of Contrition, so as to persuade us that we have it; in vain, shall we utter lamentations and sighs; in vain, shall we weep and make long prayers and protestations of renouncing sin: all this will avail nothing if, in the depths of the heart, there is no sincere regret for having offended God, no cordial detestation, no formal hatred of sin, and of affection for sin, no true sorrow for having committed it. Let us examine ourselves before God: Do we bring to our confessions a truly contrite heart? Instead of sincerely deploring our faults, have we not refused to acknowledge them? Have we not sought to dissemble them in our own eyes and in the eyes of the confessor, shielding them with excuses, that we may have less cause for shame; justifying our hastiness and impatience, by alleging the wrongs of others; our detractions and criticism, by the unreasonable conduct of our neighbor?

2. Universal Contrition. This is indispensable when there is question of mortal sins; should there be only one which we do not detest from our inmost soul, our Contrition is null, our confession sacri-

legious. God cannot love a soul that loves sin which essentially displeases Him. It is mocking God to say to Him: "I love Thee," when we have an affection for that which He sovereignly detests.—In regard to venial sins, as these do not destroy charity in the soul, although they weaken it, we may repent of some without repenting of others; nevertheless, this is followed by very serious results to the soul: 1. The sins for which we have an affection, are not forgiven; 2. The absolution, not falling on these sins, does not produce in the soul that plenitude of justification which a heart belonging wholly to God, would have obtained. However, when we have only venial sins to confess, we are obliged, under penalty of profaning the Sacrament, which is a grievous sin,—to have Contrition, at least, for some sin, before receiving absolution; because the act of contrition is an essential part of the Sacrament of Penance. For this reason we are recommended to accuse ourselves of a serious fault of our past life, for which we must be sorry before confessing.

SECOND POINT. *Our Confession must be accompanied with Sovereign and Supernatural Contrition.*—

3. Sovereign. Sovereign contrition is that, by which we are more grieved for having offended God, than for all the evils that might happen in the world. And what, O my God, is more just than such a sorrow? Dost Thou not deserve to be loved above all things? Is there in this world an evil com-

parable to sin, or to hell which is the punishment thereof? Can the loss of fortune, of reputation; can the death of our relatives, of our friends, be weighed in the balance with the loss of Thy grace and friendship; with the loss of heaven for all eternity, which is the consequence of sin? Certainly not. The smallest degree of good sense convinces us of this. It is not necessary, however, that sorrow for sin be as sensible as that which we feel in losing a father or mother: God does not require sensibility, because this does not depend on us; but, what He does require, is, that we detest sin as the sovereign evil; and that we be disposed to lose all things, to endure all miseries, rather than commit it, even once. Neither is it advisable to represent certain evils to the mind; for example, the torments of the Martyrs, to ask ourselves if we are ready to undergo all this rather than commit sin; for we have not the actual grace necessary for this trial. It is sufficient to say: If I am reduced to this extremity, I will beg of God with all my heart to grant me this grace; I am confident He will not refuse it; and this confidence gives me courage to say: "All evils, rather than sin." Let us examine if our confessions have been accompanied with this sovereign contrition.

4. Supernatural Contrition, both in its principle and in its motives. Our nature, of itself, cannot rise to the supernatural order. "We cannot of ourselves, says St. Paul, have a thought available to salvation, nor say a meritorious word." It is, then,

of Thee, O divine Spirit, that we must ask this true contrition, and from Thee alone we can expect it; but, on one condition, that we base it upon supernatural motives, as to its principle. If we detest sin only because of the remorse of our conscience, or because it has injured our reputation, this contrition is vain and sterile. True contrition has loftier motives; by it, the soul, deriving its motives from faith, has a sovereign horror of sin, a deep regret for having committed it, because, in so doing, she has displeased God whom she loves above all things. For this reason, she is inconsolable for having committed sin; this it is, that bruises and humbles her heart beyond the power of expression. Let us enter into ourselves, and see if we have brought to our confessions a contrition truly supernatural in its principle and in its motives.

THIRD POINT. *What Means we should adopt to obtain Contrition.*—1. We must ask it of God, for we cannot have it without the help of His grace. Hence, after recollecting ourselves, let us implore the light of the Holy Spirit, and conjure Him to give us a contrite and humble heart. Let us also address ourselves to our Saviour, saying to Him: O Jesus, Crucified for my sins, pour out upon my soul some drops of Thy Blood to purify it; speak to my heart by all Thy wounds as by so many mouths; and may these wounds produce in my heart perfect contrition which will dispose it to live only for Thee. I implore this grace, through the inter-

cession of the Immaculate Mary, the true Refuge of sinners.

2. We must excite ourselves to contrition by reflecting on the motives which faith proposes to us. For this end, we may, after the example of Mgr. de la Mothe, Archbishop of Amiens, make several stations; first, to hell: Let us in spirit, descend into this place of torture, and consider the abode destined for us, had not the mercy of God withdrawn us from the miserable state of sin.—Second station, at the vestibule of Purgatory: What heart-rending cries ascend from this dark abode; they are the lamentations of unfortunate souls, who, perhaps, for a long time have been subjected to these frightful torments, to expiate their tepidity in the service of God, and other light faults, similar to those of which we are about to accuse ourselves in our confession.—Third station, at the gate of heaven; we may perceive the throne of glory destined for us; but, let us consider, that as nothing defiled will ever enter heaven, we cannot occupy that throne until we have expiated even the venial sins which we have committed.—Finally, the fourth station, at Calvary: Let us fix our eyes on Jesus Crucified, saying to ourselves: This is my work. Yes, O divine Saviour, it is I who, by my sins, have pierced Thy hands and feet; I have crowned Thee with thorns; I have crucified Thee and put Thee to death. How could I treat Thee thus, after giving me such convincing marks of Thy love! O cursed sin, I detest thee! Oh!

how could I again crucify my Jesus by committing mortal sin! How could I give Him vinegar to drink, by the commission of light faults!—We readily understand how well calculated such pious considerations are, to excite us to contrition. Let us dwell upon them a few moments before each of our confessions.

3. We must then, make our act of contrition; and before entering the tribunal of penance, repeat it several times, that it may penetrate deeply into our heart. It is very useful to insist particularly on the firm purpose of amendment, in regard to such or such sins which we are about to confess; asking earnestly of God, the grace not to relapse again into them.

Let us examine, if, whenever we are to receive absolution, we take the means to excite ourselves to contrition. Let us not forget that the act of contrition is an indispensable part of the Sacrament of Penance. Let us guard against imitating those ignorant persons, who spend a great deal of time in the minute investigation of their conscience, but who excite themselves to contrition in a very superficial manner.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Poverty.

FIRST POINT. *Motives to practise Poverty.*—Let us reflect upon the following thoughts of St. Vincent

on the motives we have to give ourselves to God to practise Poverty, and to faithfully accomplish our vow on this point. The first motive, is, the excellence of the vow of Poverty: We cannot live without loving; now, by the vow of Poverty, having no longer any affection or love for created and earthly goods, we shall fix our heart upon the increased Good, and the things of heaven: hence, the vow of Poverty is a perfect and sovereign means of loving God with our whole heart.

The second motive is derived from the promises which God has made to the voluntary poor. Jesus Christ assures us that he who shall have left house, or father, or mother, or brethren, or sisters, or lands, to follow Him, shall receive a hundredfold in this world, and eternal life in the next. Have we not already experienced the effects of the first part of the promise? How many persons of the world, born in the same condition of life as we, are reduced to pressing want! We might have been similarly situated; but God has provided for us otherwise, in calling us into a Community where we find all that is necessary;—not only in this House, but in the other establishments, even in foreign countries. For one father, one mother, a few sisters, whom we left in the world, we find a hundred times as many in our Vocation. Are not all the members of the Community, so many Sisters who have as much and even more affection for us, than our sisters according to nature, who ordinarily seek but their

own interests? To this we may add all the spiritual goods with which we have been enriched. Oh! how true it is, that we have already received the hundred-fold for what we abandoned for the love of God. However, this is only the shadow of the recompense reserved for us in the other life: we resign the riches of earth only to insure those of heaven; we relinquish trifles, perishable and transitory goods, to obtain the Sovereign Good, God Himself. Oh! with what reason does Jesus Christ call the poor in spirit blessed, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!

In fine, a third motive, which should induce us to love Poverty, is, that the good order and welfare of the Company depend on the fidelity with which we practise it. Poverty is the bond of Communities and particularly of ours; it is the tie which, disengaging it from all earthly things, will attach it perfectly to God; it is an impregnable rampart which, with the help of God, will shield it from all attacks. But wo, yes, wo to us! if we become attached to the perishable goods of this life; for we shall be ensnared, we shall be pierced by the thorns, and held captive in these chains. Alas! what will become of the Community, if it give entrance to this desire of riches which the Apostle tells us is the root of all evil? No, the Community will never perish through Poverty; but, on the contrary, it will come to ruin, if Poverty is banished from it. Other Communities have given unquestionable evidence of the truth of this assertion. O my Saviour,

be pleased in Thy infinite goodness, to shield us from such a misfortune !

SECOND POINT. *To what does this State of Poverty which we have embraced, oblige us ?*—It obliges us to love and practise Poverty. 1. We should love it ; because it is the state to which we have been called, and because it procures us the most precious advantages, as we have considered. But, can I say that I love Poverty, if I desire to possess riches, or at least, to have the means of procuring whatever may satisfy my wishes ; if I speak with complacency of the distinguished rank which my relatives hold in the world, to raise myself above others ? Would it bespeak a love of poverty not to wish to be poorly clothed, nourished, and lodged ; to blush at the livery of this virtue ; to complain and murmur when something is wanting to us ? Ah ! we shall never be as destitute as our divine Saviour while upon earth. Should the disciple be better treated than his Master ? O my God, how deeply should I reproach myself ! And how many times have I not departed from Thy maxims to follow those of the world !

1. A Sister of Charity truly poor, never acts as a proprietor ; and it would be acting as such, to give, receive, lend, or borrow, without permission. She is faithful in rendering an account of the money intrusted to her ; she is careful not to have, unknown to her Superiors, money in reserve, that she may purchase without permission, things which she

imagines necessary.—2. She is careful to avoid all superfluities; not only has she no more than is necessary, but she is perfectly detached from it all, and is ready to yield up everything at the first intimation of her Superiors. She also avoids all research, all delicacies, and has a horror of all that savors of luxury, and of what would withdraw her from the limits of Poverty; she uses everything with moderation; takes the greatest care of all that is confided to her, either for her own use, or for the poor; and never suffers anything to go to waste through her fault.—3. She suffers willingly the privations imposed by the practice of Poverty; nay, more, she rejoices in them; she bears hunger, cold, and thirst, with love; she gives the preference to those Houses where poverty is visible; far from complaining when no attention is paid to her, she feels, on the contrary, that she is too well treated; far from regarding with an envious eye what is given to her companions, she esteems herself happy to have the worst of all; because she knows that then she most resembles her divine Spouse who was pleased to be in want of everything on earth, and to be treated as the last of men.

Let us examine seriously before God, to see if we are in these dispositions; and if we find that we are wanting in them, let us ask our divine Saviour, Jesus Christ, to give them to us.

THIRD POINT. *What Means should we adopt to acquire the spirit of Poverty?*—The first means, is, to

ask it of God. But our petition should be sincere and fervent ; for God proportions His graces to the earnestness of our prayers. Let us be convinced that if we have the happiness of being well established in this spirit, we shall be in possession of all heavenly treasures.

A second means, well calculated to inspire us with the love of this virtue, is, frequently to revolve in our mind the promises which Jesus Christ has made to those who are perfectly disengaged from earthly goods. But, this is not enough ; let us meditate attentively upon His divine example. Let us consider Him in His birth, lying in a manger, within a stable ; let us consider Him in His flight into Egypt, and during the thirty years that He remained in the workshop of St. Joseph ; let us follow Him during the last three years of His life, and see with what love He endured hunger, thirst, the inclemency of the seasons ; so destitute was He, that He had not where to rest His head ! Let us contemplate Him, above all, on the Cross, stripped of His garments, reduced to extreme privation, receiving only vinegar and gall in His excessive thirst.

Alas ! what is our Poverty compared with that of this divine Saviour ! Let us reflect, also upon the examples which the Saints have given us, for all endeavored to walk in the footsteps of Jesus Christ. Oh ! they despised not only the riches of the world, but even the satisfactions which a too great delicacy prompts us to seek. Let us often recall to mind the

recommendations of St. Vincent, and the example he has left us ! for God has placed him before us to serve as a special model, and to teach us what we should do to become agreeable in His divine sight. Oh ! how greatly did this Saint esteem the virtue of poverty ! Oh ! that we could be penetrated with the sentiments that filled his heart !

Let us, also, reflect on the poor in the world ; alas ! they endure all sorts of privations : they are poorly clothed, uncomfortably lodged, badly nourished ; they are often reduced to extreme want. What is our poverty compared with theirs ? How many among them would esteem themselves most happy if they were treated, I will not say as well as we, but in some degree approaching it !

We make a vow of Poverty, but alas ! how do we fulfil it ? Have we the spirit of it ? O, our Venerable Mother, who didst so much love Poverty, and who didst observe it so faithfully even to the end of thy life, and who didst so earnestly recommend the practice of it, obtain for us the spirit of poverty in all its perfection.

FIFTH DAY.

Note.—In large Retreats, as in the Mother-House, the Confessions are not generally finished on the fourth day ; in which case, Chastity, page 115, will be the first meditation of the fifth day ; Obedience, page 131, the second ; the Consideration and third meditation will remain in the order of subjects for the fifth day. The meditation on Communion will be reserved for the first meditation of the sixth day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Holy Communion.

FIRST POINT. *The Goodness which our Lord manifests to us in Holy Communion.*—Let us, first, admire the excellence of the gift which Jesus Christ bestows when He gives Himself to us in Holy Communion. This gift is infinite ; for it is Jesus Christ entire : His Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity. “This divine Saviour,” says St. John Chrysostom, “reserves nothing for Himself ; He gives all.” And St. Augustine adds ; “Although God is infinitely powerful, infinitely rich, He could not bestow anything more precious.” What gratitude do we not owe Him for such charity ! This charity is so great, says St. Augustine, that Jesus seems to have carried it even to folly. For does it not appear so, to say : Eat my Flesh, drink my Blood ? This He did when He instituted the Sacrament of the

Eucharist ; this is what He renews whenever He takes possession of our heart in Holy Communion.

Let us, also, admire the wonderful effects which our Lord operates in souls that receive Him with holy dispositions. First, He enlightens them ; for He is the light that shines upon those in darkness. The holy Prophet King said : “ Draw nigh to God, and you will be enlightened.” And we have the happiness of receiving Him within us !—Secondly : He purifies them, for our God is a consuming fire. In the same manner as fire purifies gold, rendering it more beautiful, so this divine fire purifies our souls, imparting to them a beauty, an incomparable lustre which makes them an object of admiration to Angels.—Thirdly : He warms, strengthens, and invigorates them, while speaking to them heart to heart, as to the disciples going to Emmaus, and kindling within them the fire He came on earth to bring.—Fourthly : He sanctifies our hearts, consecrating them as ciboriums of the Holy Eucharist, and weakening in us the fire of concupiscence.—Fifthly : He transforms us, in some measure, into Himself. God vouchsafed to reveal this to St. Augustine, shortly after his conversion. “ Grow, said He, and I will become your nourishment ; you will not change me into you, as ordinary nourishment is converted into your own substance, but you will be changed into me.” What a marvelous transformation. To become like to God ! To be able to say with the Apostle : “ It is no longer I who live, but Jesus

Christ liveth in me!"—Sixthly : He deposits within us the germ of a glorious resurrection : "He that eateth my Flesh, and drinketh my Blood, says Jesus Christ, hath everlasting life, and I will raise him up at the last day."

Let us admire, praise, and thank our Lord for all the graces he has heretofore granted us in this adorable Sacrament. Let us supplicate Him to pardon us for the little fruit we have derived from it ;—for the negligence and tepidity with which we have approached it ; and let us beseech Him to give us the grace to comprehend more fully, the charity he manifests in our regard, that we may profit by it in future.

SECOND POINT. *The Dispositions which we should bring to Holy Communion.*—We must do all in our power to prepare for Holy Communion : we owe this to our Lord, on account of the sovereign respect which His infinite sanctity demands. We owe it to ourselves ; for the measure of grace we shall receive in communicating, will be in proportion to our dispositions. We may say of a good Communion, what is said of a good death : namely, that it is the fruit of a good life ; this is the best disposition ; without it, all others would be insufficient. Let us endeavor to live in a Christian manner, conformably to the spirit of our Vocation, and we shall be sure to communicate well. In this consists the remote preparation.

But, what should we do for our immediate preparation? First of all, we must consider the state of our conscience. Wo to that soul who, being in a state of mortal sin, would dare approach this Holy Sacrament! "He who participates unworthily of the Holy Eucharist, eats and drinks his own condemnation," says the Apostle, St. Paul. This was the crime of Judas: this unworthy disciple was not converted; nevertheless, it was in his power to repent. Unfortunate souls who have imitated Judas, can, certainly, return to God; but let them speedily have recourse to His infinite mercy. The state of grace, therefore, is a necessary, an indispensable disposition for Communion, under penalty of committing a horrible sacrilege. To avoid making tepid Communions, other dispositions are requisite: we must, first, excite in our hearts sentiments of lively faith, firm hope, ardent charity, profound humility, and great desire to receive our Lord. We must, consequently, devote some moments to excite within us these holy dispositions, and engrave them deeply in our heart; for the preparatory acts for Communion which we read in a book, or recite from memory, will produce no salutary effect, if they find place only upon the lips. Let us beseech our Lord to infuse into our inmost soul, all the sentiments that He desires to find in us.

Such are the dispositions with which every Christian should be animated on approaching the Holy Table. But, when we have the happiness

of making frequent Communions, our dispositions should be more perfect. We must labor more earnestly at the work of our perfection, and renounce all affection to sin, even venial. According to the masters of the spiritual life, such as have the habit of committing voluntary venial faults, and who have no will to renounce them, are not worthy to approach frequently the God of all sanctity. The multiplied Communions made in dispositions so imperfect, would be fruitless, thereby subjecting the soul to a fearful responsibility of an immense abuse of grace. O my God, give me to understand this truth; grant me light to know how I stand in regard to my Communions. If I were now called to appear before Thee, would I have no cause to fear? Let us repair the past, O my soul, and do better in future.

THIRD POINT. *Of Thanksgiving after Holy Communion.*—Religion, gratitude, and our own interests, make this a duty: 1. Religion. When our Lord honors us so far as to reside within us, is it not just that all the powers of our soul assemble around Him, as it were, to keep Him company; to render Him their homage, to entertain themselves with Him, to speak and to listen to Him? Would it not be extreme irreverence, to leave Him alone in the depth of our heart,—to pay no attention to Him, to occupy the mind with other thoughts? Would we, in this manner, receive a distinguished guest, or a friend who comes to visit us?—2. Gratitude. We

should return thanks to God, the Father, who has given us, not manna, as to the Israelites in the desert, but His own Son. We should thank God, the Son, who gives Himself entirely to us; who gives Himself to all; who gives continually without ever exhausting Himself. Oh! with what ardor should we exclaim: Thanks be to God, for His unspeakable gift! If we could understand what this Gift of God merits, our heart would dissolve in love.—3. Our own interests. In the moments following Communion, the soul can more easily enjoy Jesus Christ, be filled with His spirit, and be penetrated with His love. At this time, also, Jesus Christ is disposed to enlighten, warm, and move the soul; the Sacrament produces its effects principally at this time, provided it meets with no hindrance. Consequently, by neglecting our thanksgiving, we would put an obstacle to grace; we would be like the beggar unwilling to wait for the alms which the benefactor was ready to bestow.

Let us examine ourselves. Have we always made our thanksgiving during the time allotted by custom? During this time, have we not suffered our mind to wander, neglecting to impose upon ourselves the necessary restraint to curb the flights of our imagination, to keep united to our Lord, and to perform devoutly the acts proper to this exercise? Have we not postponed, abridged, or interrupted our thanksgiving under the slightest pretexts? Alas! whence is it, that we have derived so little fruit

from our multiplied Communions? The most ordinary cause, is, that our thanksgiving has been improperly made.

O my divine Saviour, grant that, henceforth, I may respond to Thy divine charity, by the most tender, generous, and ardent love. Oh ! that I could be inflamed with the holy ardor of the Cherubim and Seraphim ! Immaculate Mary, Mother of Jesus, and my tender Mother, obtain for me, a share of thy holy dispositions for the Communion of this Retreat ; that it may be the model of all those I shall have the happiness of making until death !

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Chastity.

FIRST POINT. *The Excellence and Advantages of Chastity.*—1. All the Doctors of the Church assure us, that this virtue renders us like to Angels ; because, in a mortal body, subject to all sorts of passions, we live as if we were pure spirits.

2. Our divine Saviour proved to us how agreeable this virtue is to Him, in being pleased to be born of a Virgin Mother ; in choosing for His Foster-Father, St. Joseph, whose exalted purity entitled him to the signal honor of being the guardian of the virginity of Mary. Our Saviour had also a special love for St. John, the virgin disciple ; and, at the last Supper, He permitted this Apostle to rest upon His

Sacred Heart, to draw thence those burning flames of charity with which his heart glowed till his last sigh. In a word, it was the good pleasure of this divine Saviour, that all who approached Him more intimately, should be adorned with the aureola of the most perfect Chastity. Who would not love a virtue which renders us the privileged friends of Jesus Christ !

3. Chastity makes us also spouses of our Lord ; that is, it unites us to Him in the most intimate manner. But, what an honor for us to be the spouses of Jesus Christ ! What more glorious, what more advantageous ! For, to whom will the most precious graces of this divine Saviour be imparted, if not to those souls entirely consecrated to Him ? We may say that they are at the source of grace, and that Jesus Christ could refuse them nothing ; moreover, He purifies them, and enriches them with all virtues.

4. If the happiness of chaste souls is great upon earth, who could describe the bliss reserved for them in heaven ? They form there a special hierarchy, a privileged choir ; they encircle and follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth ; they are clothed in robes of white, symbolic of the beautiful virtue which they practised upon earth, and they sing a canticle which they alone can comprehend. Oh ! how happy is the state of those who have vowed Chastity to God ! O my divine Saviour, how can I worthily testify my gratitude to Thee, for the great favor Thou didst

confer upon me in calling me to the practice of perfect Chastity ! Grant me the grace so to appreciate this favor, that, henceforth, I may fear nothing so much as to lose so beautiful and precious a virtue.

SECOND POINT. *To what is a Sister of Charity obliged by her vow of Chastity ?*—She is obliged to preserve her body and soul in perfect purity. And, first, her body. By the vow of Chastity, she has consecrated to our Lord, in a special manner, her body which had already become the temple of the Holy Ghost by Baptism. Hence, any fault committed against the angelic virtue, would be attended with peculiar gravity : it would be a sacrilege. All her members are thus consecrated to God ; the delicacy of purity, therefore, requires her to guard carefully her eyes, her ears, her tongue, all her exterior senses. But, if we should preserve our bodies in great purity, because they are the temples of the Holy Spirit, with how much greater reason must we avoid all that could sully our hearts, which are His sanctuaries ! Oh ! how small a thing may sadden the Spirit of God, and banish Him from our hearts, when there is question of faults against this delicate virtue ! A simple unchaste thought upon which the mind dwells with pleasure, is sufficient to make us lose the grace of God.

We should, then, watch over all the faculties of the soul : over our memory, to reject all recollections contrary to Chastity ; over our will, that we may desire nothing displeasing to God ; over our under-

standing, that we may never entertain thoughts which could, in the least, tarnish the beauty of our soul ; over our heart, that it may never indulge too tender affection for any one. But, as these interior faults are often occasioned by exterior objects, it becomes doubly necessary to guard the exterior senses, even when they might not be immediately sullied, according to what has been above remarked. Hence, following the recommendations of St. Vincent, we should avoid all familiarities, even with our companions : maintaining ourselves in great modesty ; and, after the example of the holy man, Job, making a compact with our eyes, lest they become for us an occasion of sin. Let us remember that one glance formerly caused the fall of the holy King David. We should also watch over our words, that we may say nothing calculated to draw others into evil ; for it requires but a spark to produce a frightful conflagration. Let us examine ourselves attentively upon all these points, and adopt generous resolutions for the future.

THIRD POINT. *What Means should we employ to observe Chastity?*—The first, is prayer. “Having learned, says Solomon, that I could not be continent unless God gave me the grace, I cast myself at the feet of the Lord, and besought Him to grant me this virtue.” This we should, also, do : We should ask it of God, ask it of Him frequently ; ask it of Him, above all, when we are assailed by temptations ; if we are faithful in having recourse to God,

He will never permit our enemies to triumph over our weakness. Let us frequently address ourselves to the Immaculate Mary, the Virgin of virgins.

A second means, is, to avoid occasions. But what are these occasions? They are: frequent communications with seculars, and, above all, with persons of the other sex. Chastity does not love noise, nor visits; it shuns exposure; it loves to hide itself in solitude; there it increases, is strengthened, and is rendered more beautiful. If you go abroad, let it be always from necessity,—for the interests of God, and for the solace of the afflicted. Do not prolong conversations; be polite, but reserved. Have a horror of compliments and flattering words that may be addressed to you; think that cruel serpents are concealed under these flowers. Know that you have everything to fear from persons who flatter you; and be convinced, that you cannot be too much on your guard against that perfidious and seductive language. Shun, also, private friendships with your companions. You could not believe how skilful the demon of impurity is, in profiting by these friendships, to diffuse into the heart the most subtle and dangerous poison. These friendships appear innocent in the beginning, they often commence under pretext of devotion and spirituality; but, it is not long, before they are corrupted, and degenerate into friendships altogether carnal.

In fine, be faithful in repulsing the temptations that may surprise you. You must expect to have

them, but be not alarmed ; temptations are not an evil, they are even useful ; they serve to strengthen our virtue. Do not suffer yourself to be discouraged by the multiplicity and strength of your temptations ; but guard, also, against yielding to negligence. When you perceive that the enemy attacks you, resist promptly, but with gentle firmness ; that is, be faithful to repel all the wicked suggestions of the flesh ; say to God from your inmost soul, and repeat it often : that you would prefer to die rather than consent to anything displeasing to Him. Take refuge in the wounds of Jesus ; cast yourself into the arms of Mary ; and rest assured that all the rage of your enemies will turn to their confusion.

Let us enter into ourselves. Have we employed these several means ? If we find that we have not been faithful, let us humble ourselves profoundly before God, and adopt resolutions for the future.

CONSIDERATION.

On Modesty.

FIRST POINT. *Motives to practise Modesty.*—1. Modesty ought to be one of your virtues of predilection, because it is the guardian of chastity, without which you could not be agreeable to your divine Spouse, who delights to dwell among the lilies. And if you do not practise this virtue of Modesty, chastity will soon be blighted by the poisonous breath of

vice. The spouse of Jesus Christ is compared to a garden inclosed; but Modesty serves as the walls thereof, preventing the entrance of enemies into her heart. She who is destitute of this virtue, is like a garden without inclosure, into which the enemy penetrates, bringing desolation and ruin.

2. A Sister of Charity adorned with the virtue of Modesty, edifies every one; she commands the respect of all; and, on beholding her, souls are drawn to the love of virtue. On the contrary, she who allows herself a word too free, an inconsiderate look, an affected gait, excites unfavorable suspicions in her regard, and compromises the works she undertakes for the glory of God and the salvation of souls. For this reason, St. Paul said to the faithful of his time: "Let your Modesty be known to all." But, if all Christians should be distinguished by their Modesty, what should be the perfection of this virtue in a Sister of Charity, bound to labor for the glory of God and the salvation of souls! Everything in her should be holy and edifying; she should everywhere diffuse around her the good odor of Jesus Christ. Hence, St. Vincent so often recommended this virtue; he declared on one occasion, that he had no greater pleasure, than to see with what Modesty his Daughters passed through the streets; while, on the contrary, his heart was deeply grieved when he saw any one wanting in this virtue.

3. In fine, we should practise this virtue to become like unto our Lord, who was pleased to be a

perfect model of Modesty. This it was, that charmed every one and drew after Him an immense crowd, never weary of admiring Him. This virtue must have shone in our divine Saviour with dazzling splendor, and made a deep impression on those who were witnesses of it; since we see the Apostle, when desiring to obtain some sacrifice of the Corinthians, solicit it by the Modesty of Jesus Christ. How have we imitated our divine model?

SECOND POINT. *How we should practise Modesty.*—1. Modesty should, above all, regulate the carriage of the head and the composure of the features. It would not be becoming to walk with the head too elevated, or with too confident an air; this would bespeak haughtiness. We must keep a guard, particularly, over the eyes, having them slightly cast down; and refraining, on all occasions, from immoderate bursts of laughter, in compliance with the recommendations found in the Holy Books.—2. Modesty should also appear in the countenance, and in the posture of the body. This ought not to be too much bent, or inclined more to one side than to the other; but erect, without restraint or affectation. In fine, Modesty requires that we refrain from proud and haughty gestures, looks and manners that are soft and effeminate, or too free,—bespeaking levity and immortification.—3. Modesty in words, demands that we speak neither too much nor too little; it condemns those who allow others no time to speak,—

interrupting them, or anticipating them by too precipitate a reply. It regulates the tone of the voice, that it be neither too low nor too loud; it does not suffer us to speak in an imperious, arrogant, or angry tone; it avoids all kinds of disputes and contentions; preferring, says St. Gregory Nazianzen, to be overcome by yielding with Modesty, than to conquer by too great obstinacy.—4. Modesty in dress, demands that we never depart from the poverty and simplicity of our holy Vocation; it requires us to dress and undress in a becoming manner, and in the presence of God; it avoids all over-nicety, as well as all negligence.—5. Modesty in repasts, requires that we observe silence, listen to the reading, and that our exterior be so regulated, that these words of the Prophet King may be applicable to us: “The just make their repasts in the presence of God.”—6. We should, with much greater reason, observe Modesty in churches and chapels which are consecrated to God. We ought to enter them with recollection, observe therein a rigorous silence: guarding carefully the eyes, and edifying the faithful by our religious deportment and respect for the Majesty of God abiding in this temple.

Let us examine ourselves on these different rules; let us see wherein we have failed, and take the resolution to correct all the faults of which we perceive ourselves guilty on this important point.

THIRD POINT. *The Means we should adopt to observe Modesty.*—1. You would not be guilty of

anything contrary to Modesty in presence of one for whom you entertained the highest respect ; therefore, bear in mind that your Guardian Angel is constantly with you ; that he is witness of all you do, whether in public or in private. The thought of the presence of this prince of the heavenly Court, will prompt you to behave with the greatest reserve. Consider above all, that God, who is everywhere present, sees all your actions, hears all your words, and penetrates the most hidden recesses of your heart. He is your Judge : would you offend Him in His very presence ? The Apostle, St. Paul, recommends this means when he says : “ Let your Modesty be known to all, for the Lord is nigh.”

2. To observe an exact Modesty, we should avoid dissipation and precipitancy, which are its greatest enemies. We must, then, guard against too great natural activity, performing every action with weight and measure, in view of God and for God ; and engage in our occupations with that quiet and composure which exclude all inattention ; in a word, to regulate all our actions according to principles of faith and reason.

3. In fine, a very efficacious means to acquire perfect Modesty, is, to cast our eyes frequently upon our divine Saviour, and take Him for a model in all we do, and in all our intercourse with our neighbor. Thus, when you rise, or when you retire, recall to mind the admirable Modesty of our Saviour ; when you take your repasts, ask yourself what was His

deportment on such occasions ; while going through the streets, represent to yourself the Modesty of our Lord, as He walked through the city of Jerusalem, and other places which He evangelized. If you speak to your neighbor, consider this divine Master conversing with His Apostles ; when you repair to the church, remember the severity with which He reproached those who violated the sanctity of the Temple. In fine, in all you do, in all you say, have Jesus ever before your eyes. Endeavor to imitate Him, and you will, yourself, become a perfect model of Modesty. During life, you will be a subject of edification to all who behold you, and, after death, your recompense will be eternal.

Examine if you have employed these means ; and if you have failed to do so, beg pardon of God, and resolve to be more faithful in future.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Mortification.

FIRST POINT. *Mortification is a necessary Virtue.*—Reason convinces us of this. Man was created in the state of original justice ; therefore, all within him was well ordered : the spirit was subject to God, and the senses were obedient to reason. But in consequence of sin, man forfeited all these inestimable advantages : the law of the members conflicted with that of the spirit ; the fire of concupiscence

enkindled all his passions, enticing him to seek sensible pleasures, and thereby to fall into every disorder. It is, then, clear, that in order to subdue our passions, and to curb our evil inclinations, we have great need of Mortification.

2. Jesus Christ teaches this: "If any one will come after me," says He to us, "let him deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me.—If the grain of wheat, falling into the earth, die not, itself remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit.—He who loveth his life, shall lose it; and he who hateth his life shall find it.—He that doth not take up his cross and follow me, is not worthy of me." But, what is it to follow Jesus Christ, and to bear the cross, if not to pass our life in the practice of the most perfect Mortification? For, the life of this divine Saviour, from His birth to His death, was but a constant exercise of Mortification. What our Lord taught regarding the necessity of Mortification, the Apostles inculcated with marked persistence. St. Paul says that if, by the spirit, we mortify the deeds of the flesh, we shall live; but if we live according to the flesh, we shall die.

3. Our Vocation imperiously demands this practice of Mortification. The labors to which we devote ourselves are so painful,—the life we lead is so opposed to the inclinations of nature;—the sacrifices we are called upon to offer to our Lord are so multiplied; that, without a spirit of extraordinary Mortification, we shall never comply with

our obligations ; we shall never acquire the spirit of our state. Hence, St. Vincent tells us that our Vocation absolutely requires the spirit of Mortification, and that we cannot be Sisters of Charity without it.

O my good Saviour, I now understand that if I wish to be Thy disciple and to be a good Sister of Charity, I must labor to mortify myself. Grant me the grace courageously to surmount all the repugnance of nature, and to follow Thee, generously carrying my cross ; that I may one day, taste the joys that will become the portion of those who will have led a mortified life.

SECOND POINT. *Exterior Mortification.*—Our divine Saviour has given us an example of this Mortification, by the life of hardship which He led ; never giving his body any satisfaction that it might demand, and imposing upon Himself all kinds of privation. This is, also, what the Saints have done at all times. The Apostle, St. Paul, says : “I chastise my body and reduce it to servitude, for fear lest, after having preached to others, I myself become an anathema.” These words of the Apostle indicate two kinds of Mortification : 1. To chastise the body ; 2. To reduce it to servitude.

1. To chastise the body. This we do by fasting, hair-cloth, and discipline ; but, we can employ these means only with the permission of Superiors ; and even then, with measure and discretion, lest we unfit ourselves for the duties of our Vocation. We may

chastise the body in many other ways which do not expose us to the same danger, and which would be no less meritorious ; thus, for example : to support with patience cold, heat, and other inconveniences of the seasons ; being exact to rise every morning at the first sound of the bell ; to be indifferent as to the quality of food,—partaking of that which is unpalatable as well as that which is agreeable ; to avoid seeking comfortable positions, even to take such as are painful, especially during prayer.

2. To reduce the body to servitude ; that is, to regulate our senses in such a manner, that they may not become for us an occasion of sin. You will mortify the eyes by modesty ; the tongue by silence, as well as by reserve and discretion in conversation with your companions ; but, principally, with externs ; you will mortify the hearing, by not listening to vain and curious things, to murmurs and complaints which offend God. If you will see everything, tell everything, and listen to everything, your soul will resemble a city whose gates are left open, so that the enemy can enter and lay all desolate. Oh ! how important it is, thus to reduce the body to servitude, if we would persevere in that fidelity which we owe to God, and advance in the practice of virtue ! Let us examine ourselves attentively before God. Let us humble ourselves profoundly, and take generous resolutions for the future.

THIRD POINT. *Interior Mortification.*—A Sister of Charity who wishes to avoid sin and attain the

perfection of her state, should mortify her memory, never indulging dangerous recollections; nor even the remembrance of her relatives, of her country, of any earthly thing; and frequently call to mind these words of the Holy Spirit: My Daughter, forget thy people and thy father's house, and the King shall greatly desire thy beauty."—2. She should mortify her imagination, by banishing dangerous representations; and restrain it with regard to indifferent things, that it may be free for the holy exercise of prayer and meditation.—3. She ought to mortify her judgment, submitting it to that of her Superiors in all that is not sinful; and endeavoring to judge of things, not according to her own spirit, but subjecting it entirely to that of God, to that of her Superiors, and even to that of her neighbor; preferring, rather, to do the will of another than her own.—5. She should watch over the desires of her heart, to see if they are conformed to her obligations, and to what God demands of her; she ought to avoid superfluous desires, and imitate the gardener who always holds the pruning knife in his hand, to lop off all useless branches, that only exhaust the sap, and prevent the plant from producing fruits.

Oh! how happy will that Sister be, who strives to die to herself! Her life will be hidden in Jesus Christ, as says the Apostle, St. Paul; she will enjoy peace, and the most perfect security; her passions will be enchained, and will do her no injury; she will make great progress in perfection; and, sus-

tained by grace, she will obtain heaven. O my divine Saviour! who didst come upon earth to teach us how to mortify our passions, we conjure Thee to give us the grace to live, henceforth, in a manner conformable to Thy sublime teachings. Ah! do not permit that Thy Daughters, after having been specially called to honor the life which Thou didst lead upon earth, should live the life of the senses; but grant them the grace to live the life which Thou didst lead here below, that they may deserve to be glorified with Thee in heaven.

SIXTH DAY.

Note.—When the sixth day is appointed for Communion, the first Meditation of the fifth day: Upon the Excellence of Communion, will be read as the first Meditation of the sixth day; and the Meditation upon Obedience, will be the second Meditation for the fifth day.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Obedience.

FIRST POINT. *Motives of Obedience.*—1. The example of our Lord. Jesus practised this virtue, not only in regard to His heavenly Father, but, also, towards the Blessed Virgin, St. Joseph, and others invested with authority, whether virtuous or otherwise; His Obedience commenced with His life; it conducted Him to death, and to the death of the Cross.—2. Its excellence. This virtue is so exalted that, according to the Holy Ghost, it is better to obey than to offer sacrifice to God. At all times, sacrifice was appointed to render to the divine Majesty, the homage due to Him, and to appease His anger justly enkindled against mankind; and yet, God prefers Obedience to sacrifice. Oh! how beautiful is this virtue! It is, says St. Vincent, as the aureola with which artists encircle the head of Saints, making them known as such, the moment we see them.—3. Its admirable effects.

In performing all our actions through Obedience, we are sure of accomplishing the will of God, and this is a source of peace, of spiritual joy,—an anticipated Paradise. On the contrary, there is no peace, where there is no Obedience; disobedient souls are in constant anxiety, they are insupportable even to themselves.—4. Its necessity. A Community cannot subsist without Obedience. What, indeed, would be the condition of a Community, if all the members wished to command, and no one be found to obey? This would be a body whose members would not be united, a body without a head,—in a word, a horrible monster in the moral order!

SECOND POINT. *Dispositions we should have in regard to our Superiors.*—The first thing that a good Sister of Charity ought to do, is to consider God in her Superiors. Were she to obey only in consideration of the qualities of those in authority, she would lose all the merit of her Obedience before God, because she would not submit to Him, but to the creature; nor would this apparent Obedience be of long duration; for, should her Superiors chance to displease her, or should they be changed, she would cease to obey. Oh! how good, how advantageous it is to consider God in all things, and to act under all circumstances, by the spirit of faith. Oh! how meritorious is such Obedience for eternal life!

The second condition which a Sister of Charity should fulfil in order to make her Obedience agree-

able to God, is, to love her Superiors. If she is bound to love her companions, with how much greater reason is she obliged to love those who hold the place of God in her regard! Therefore, she should repress all the repugnance and aversion she might conceive against them; she ought to support them, notwithstanding their defects; share their pains, pray for them, speak to them with openness of heart; give them comfort, and avoid that abrupt and rude manner of acting, which bespeaks a faulty education and a bad heart. She ought to love them, but love them in God;—that the love she entertains for them may be supernatural, and independent of their dispositions in her regard.

Thirdly, she ought to respect them because they hold the place of God; bearing in mind what our divine Saviour says, speaking of Superiors: “He who hears you hears me; and he who despises you, despises me.” She ought to guard against contemning them either in her mind, or exteriorly. Let her remember that Mary, the sister of Moses, was struck with leprosy, and banished from the camp, for having murmured against her brother; and that the earth opened and swallowed up alive Core, Dathan, and Abiron, for murmuring against the servant of God. She should bear in mind, that a person who, through her own fault, is not on good terms with her Superiors, will not be on good terms with God.

THIRD POINT. *Qualities of Obedience.*—Obedience should be prompt. The grace of God, says St.

Ambrose, knows no delay. Oh! if we only reflected that we act for God, this thought would give us wings to execute promptly whatever is commanded us! God attaches signal graces to promptitude in obeying. Oftentimes, it happens that all our success depends upon it. Our Lord says to St. Peter: "Leave your boats and nets, and come, follow me." Immediately, St. Peter abandons all things to do what Jesus Christ commands, and by this, he merits to be chosen Head of the Church.—2. Obedience ought to be entire. A Sister should not content herself with obeying in one point, or doing only a part of what is commanded; but, she should execute orders at the time, place, and in the manner indicated, and according to the intention of her Superiors. Of what avail would it be to comply with a part of the command and neglect the rest? God suffers no rapine in the holocaust, He wishes our will entire. And that our Obedience may be entire, we must obey not only exteriorly, but conform our will interiorly; that is, we must submit our judgment, and be convinced that in doing what is ordained, we perform what is incomparably more agreeable to God, than if we had followed our own inclination.—3. Our Obedience must also, be courageous; that is, we should obey in all things, even such as are most repugnant; and undertake the most difficult enterprises, if commanded, in imitation of Jesus Christ and the Saints.

4. In fine, our Obedience should be constant ; that is, it must last to the end of our life, and become daily more perfect. To say that Obedience is not intended for an ancient Sister of the Community, is to assert that she has no right to the kingdom of heaven.

O my God ! I renounce my own will, I wish, henceforth, to have no will but Thine. Speak, Lord Jesus, speak, command, I am entirely Thine. Demand of me any sacrifice whatever, I am ready to make it ; I am ready to quit all and go wherever Thou pleasest. Hereafter, I shall not consider the person who commands ; but only Thee and Thy good pleasure in all things ; and I will place my happiness in having no will but Thine.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Detachment.

FIRST POINT. *Motives to practise Detachment.*—

1. Listen, O my soul, to the teachings of our divine Saviour : “ No man,” says He, “ can serve two masters at the same time.” And, what are our attachments but imperious masters that daily demand of us what is opposed to the will of God ? And how can we say that we belong to God, while we are slaves to His enemies ? Our Saviour declares to us that, unless we renounce all, we cannot be His disciples. 2. As Sisters of Charity, we are called to love God in the highest degree. But, how

can we do this if we love anything else? To whom have you compared me, said the Lord, to His people of old,—to whom have you compared me? Alas! He could well make us these reproaches. And, nevertheless, when God called us, to our holy Community, He wished to make of us a perfect people, entirely devoted to Him, having only the interests of His glory at heart;—a people who, by the spirit of renunciation, would shine as a brilliant light amid the darkness of a corrupt world.

3. We are obliged to practise this virtue, on account of the duties imposed upon us by our Vocation. We shall be worthy instruments in doing good, only inasmuch as we shall be perfectly disengaged from all things. If we consider who those persons are to whom Almighty God, at all times, gave power to effect so much good, we shall see that they were great and generous souls, who renounced absolutely the things of earth, to seek God alone. The Apostles converted the world, because they left all things to attach themselves to Jesus Christ. Oh! if Jesus were truly in our heart, if we prized Him above all earthly goods, we would effect wonders; we would carry edification everywhere; we would cause the love of this divine Saviour to reign in the hearts of all who come in contact with us. What a powerful motive, then, have we not, to labor earnestly to establish ourselves in this spirit of Detachment! Ah! may it please God to grant us the grace to seek Him

alone ! O my God, attract our hearts so powerfully to Thee, that the force of this attraction may entirely break the chains which fasten us to creatures ; that nothing may prevent us from loving Thee alone, oh, Thou, who shouldst be the only object of our love !

SECOND POINT. *Detachment from Exterior things.*
—Detachment consists in keeping our hearts free from all disorderly affections, either for creatures or for ourselves. God does not forbid a just, reasonable affection, but He forbids disorderly affections ; that is, those which divide our heart, which overrule the affection that we ought to have for Him ; which are an obstacle to the fulfilment of our duties, and which arrest, or retard us in the acquisition of perfection. We ought to be detached not only from exterior goods, riches, etc., but also from our relatives. Our Lord recommends this, when He says, that he who does not renounce all,—father, mother, brothers, and sisters, is not worthy of Him. One of His disciples having asked leave to go and bury his father, Jesus said to him : Let the dead bury the dead ; teaching us that we should no longer concern ourselves about those we have left,—that we should forget them ; not that He forbids us to love them spiritually, to desire their good, and to pray for them ; but He wishes that the love we entertain for them be not terrestrial, but entirely supernatural. The Holy Spirit tells us that the protection of God will become the inheritance of him who says to his

father and mother: "I know you not;" and to his brethren: "I have forgotten you." And to souls called to a life in Community, He says: "Listen, O Daughter, and give ear to my word: Forget thy people and thy father's house, and the Lord, in exchange for this sacrifice, will choose thee for His well-beloved spouse." Oh! what a subject of joy for us, if our hearts are entirely detached from our relatives. It follows from this, that a Sister of Charity must also be detached from her country, she must no longer speak of it; her true country is heaven, as St. Paul says. She ought to raise her eyes frequently to heaven, and sigh incessantly for the happy moment, when it will be given her to possess it.

She ought also to guard against becoming attached to persons with whom she has intercourse, whether Superiors, inferiors, or companions; and be ready to abandon all at the voice of obedience. Jesus Christ makes no exception. "He who does not renounce all," says He, "cannot be my disciple." Consequently, a Sister should be detached from places and employments; be ready to live with all sorts of persons, to go wherever she may be sent, and fulfil any duty that may be intrusted to her; like the servant of the Centurion mentioned in the Gospel, to whom he says: Go, and he goeth; Come, and he cometh; Do this, and he doeth it.

THIRD POINT. *Detachment from Self.*—"If any one," says our Saviour, "wishes to become my dis-

ciple, he must renounce himself." Hence, we must be detached from our body. What is this body, but a little clay which will soon become the food of worms? It is a mark of a narrow and little mind, to esteem the beauty of the body, or to be too careful in point of dress; this would be unworthy of a person consecrated to God. A Sister of Charity who knows not how to suffer with patience, will always be immortified, and will never make great progress in virtue. But this Detachment should penetrate even into the interior of our soul, and retrench all that is disorderly therein: the will, in order to bend it to the yoke of obedience; the judgment, so as to suffer ourselves to be led like little children. To be unwilling to yield to the sentiments of another, to maintain strongly our own views, and to wish others to conform to them, is to be attached to our own judgment. We ought even to be detached from the immoderate desire of succeeding in our employments; we must, doubtless, use every effort to acquit ourselves of them well, but we should leave the success thereof to God. We ought also, to detach ourselves from all spiritual consolations, and be ready to serve God in aridity, disgust, distractions, desolation, and abandonment, after the example of our divine Saviour. We should, moreover, be detached from our exercises of piety, and be ready to continue or leave them, according as the will of God may require. In fine, when we have done all that depends on us to acquit ourselves

faithfully of our duty, we should not be troubled or disquieted, fearing that we have not made sufficient effort; let us humble ourselves profoundly before God, but be on our guard against discouragement.

Let us examine ourselves seriously on these divers points, and see, before God, if we are in this practice of Detachment. O my divine Saviour, grant us the grace to labor with courage to destroy within us all that is displeasing to Thee; or rather, speak Thyself and command these chains to fall, which hold us captive and prevent us from going to Thee. Thou didst draw the people after Thee into the desert; deign to attract us and unite us to Thee so strongly, that nothing, henceforth, will be able to separate us from Thee, who art our life, our joy, our consolation, and our happiness.

CONSIDERATION.

On the Manner of fulfilling our Duty.

FIRST POINT. *Why should we apply ourselves to discharge well our Duty?*—1. Because God has imposed it upon us, and He will demand a rigorous account thereof. As, in the order of nature, each creature occupies the place assigned by divine Providence; in like manner, in Communities, this divine Providence, through the medium of Superiors, who are His instruments, appoints to each member a particular Duty. Hence, it follows, that God has intrusted

our Duty to us, and He imposes upon us the obligation of discharging it properly; for He will one day demand a severe account of the manner in which we have acquitted ourselves of it. It is written; "Cursed is he who doth the work of the Lord negligently." This anathema would fall heavily upon us, should we be guilty of serious neglect in the accomplishment of the Duties of our office. Let us not expose ourselves to such a misfortune.

2. We must discharge well our Duty, because our spiritual interests demand it. In faithfully attending to our office, the duties of which occupy the entire day, we are constantly doing the will of God. Does not perfection consist in this? Moreover, God will never be outdone in generosity; what precious blessings will He not shed upon a Sister who, from morning till night, serves Him with a holy eagerness in the person of the poor! In fine, is not this the surest means of gaining daily, new merits for heaven? How many acts of charity, of mortification, of patience, we are obliged to practise in the fulfilment of any office in our Vocation! Therefore, if we faithfully perform our Duty, we have every reason to hope, that, at the last day, our Lord will address these consoling words to us: "Come, ye blessed of my Father, for I was hungry, and you gave me to eat, etc."

3. We should fulfil the Duties of our office well, because the salvation of many souls depends upon it. The Church is specially solicitous for children,

for the poor, and for the sick. She confides to us the important task of instructing children, of consoling the poor, and of preparing the sick for a good death. By this means we can save many souls; but we cannot obtain this desirable result, unless we daily devote ourselves to the fulfilment of the Duty confided to us. A Sister of Charity will not save herself alone; she must, by her works of mercy, gain many souls to our Lord. What a happiness if she attains this end! But, alas! what a misfortune should it be otherwise! Oh! how well calculated is this reflection to excite within us the greatest zeal in the accomplishment of our Duty! The sanctification of souls is so delicate a work, that sometimes a negligence, very slight in appearance, is sufficient to compromise it.

SECOND POINT. *What must we do to fulfil in a proper manner the Duty confided to us?*—1. We should perform it with great purity of intention,—acting only for God, seeking only His glory and good pleasure; void of this disposition, we lose, for heaven, all the fruit of our labors.

2. We should discharge our Duty with humility; that is, we should not be elated on account of our success, but bear in mind what our divine Saviour tells us: that He who exalts himself, shall be humbled. If, then, a Sister takes complacency in the good she does, in the praises she receives, let her tremble; it will not be long before God will humble her. Let us, then, guard against being

elated with our success ; let it not cause us to elevate ourselves above our companions, or to assume an air of importance or of authority ; but let us address every one with respect, and look upon ourselves, as the humble servant of those with whom we have intercourse.

3. We should be courageous in the discharge of our Duty ; that is, we should not suffer ourselves to be dejected by the difficulties we meet with, nor be disheartened on account of the little success we attain ; for God does not require of us success, He only demands that we do all that depends on us to succeed. God regards the good will alone ; and He rewards our good desires as well as the highest success.

4. We ought to fulfil our Duty in a spirit of subordination : that is, we should act in obedience to what our Holy Rules prescribe, and in accordance with the will of our Superiors. Whatever is done out of the line of obedience, even should we effect wonders, could not be agreeable to God ; it would only draw upon us His chastisements. We ought not to follow our own lights, nor act of ourselves, if we wish God to bless us. Not only should we obey our Superiors, but even those whom the Sister Servant may place over us in duty. The Sisters who work together, should be on their guard not to contradict one another ; they should never contend, but be full of deference and condescension for one another, so that all may act in concert ; otherwise,

trouble and confusion would ensue, the Duty would be badly fulfilled, and our neighbor be scandalized.

5. In fine, we must avoid over-eagerness, keeping the thought of God's presence always in the mind ; not so much concerned as to the exterior, but acting in a spirit of faith. Without this precaution, we lose the spirit of recollection ; we labor much, it is true, but like persons of the world ; so that we are only busy members of the Community, but not true Sisters of Charity. In consequence of this, our exercises of piety are much neglected ; they become irksome, and profit us very little, because the heart is not united with God.

Examine if you have not been guilty of many failings in your Duty ; and, having humbled yourself before God, take efficacious resolutions for the future.

THIRD POINT. *What Means should a good Sister of Charity take to acquit herself well of her Duty ?*—The first, is, to be convinced that she cannot succeed without the assistance of grace. She should, therefore, have recourse to God, and ask for the light and strength necessary to perform her Duty well.

The second means, is, to endeavor, as far as in her power, to acquaint herself with the rules of her particular Duty ; these rules are replete with wisdom, and founded upon experience ; consequently, she should observe them.

Another means which may contribute to aid us in the well-performance of our Duty, is, to establish

ourselves, as St. Vincent teaches, in a holy indifference for the various employments with which we may be charged in the Company. We must guard against seeking one occupation in preference to another; because in so doing, we depart from the ways of Providence, to do our own will. Yet, if our Superiors wish to give us a duty for which we feel ourselves incompetent, we are permitted to make our representations to them, with respect and humility; there is even an obligation for us to do this.

One obstacle that might prevent you from discharging your Duty well, would be to give way to weariness and disgust, on account of the difficulties found therein,—thinking you could not save your soul while charged with that employment. Banish these thoughts immediately; be persuaded that they proceed only from the demon who strives to deceive you: for never was any one lost in the practice of obedience, whereas, none have been saved by following their own will. Firmly resist all such temptations, and do not yield to discouragement; God will always be with you in the midst of your difficulties; and, by His grace, you will triumph over all obstacles. Yet, there are certain cases in which it is permitted to ask for a change of Duty; for instance: if, on account of your weakness you would be exposed to commit considerable faults, and if your Duty should become for you an immediate cause of serious sin. In such a case there must be no hesitation, you should immediately ask for a

change. But, this should not be done on account of disinclination, or trifling difficulties met with in our Duty.

In fine, a last means, to enable you to do well what is prescribed you, is, to frequently call to mind the magnificent recompense which awaits you in heaven, if you consecrate your whole life to the service of the poor.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Service of the Poor.

FIRST POINT. *Motives which should induce you to apply with affection to the Service of the Poor.*—The first motive, is, that God has called you to the Service of the Poor, preferably to so many others. “It is not you who have chosen me,” said this divine Saviour, formerly, to His disciples, “but it is I who have chosen you.” Therefore, you are sure of doing the will of God when you are engaged in the Service of the Poor. But, are you not very happy to do always the will of God? Is there anything more perfect?

A second motive which ought to act powerfully upon the heart of a Sister of Charity; is, that in applying herself to the duties of her state, she relieves the distressed and consoles the afflicted; thus becoming a living image of Providence, who supplies the wants of mankind. Is it not the property of

great souls to delight in doing good? And not only does she relieve the corporal miseries of the Poor, but, what is still more important, she ministers to their spiritual needs; she teaches them to know God, to love, and serve Him. By inducing them to purify themselves from sin by a good confession, she snatches their souls from hell, and opens to them the gates of heaven. The day will come, when those souls whom she will have saved, will bless her during endless ages; they will lay their crowns at her feet, testifying thereby, that, after God, they are indebted to her for their happiness.

The third motive which should make a Sister of Charity love and cherish the Service of the Poor, is, the advantages derived therefrom. She finds in her Vocation the means of obtaining the remission of her sins; for it is written: "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy." She will easily attain a high degree of perfection, because, charity being the most excellent of all virtues, the acts which she constantly makes of this virtue, render her most agreeable to God. She daily acquires new merits, and lays up treasures for heaven which will never perish. In fine, her death will be happy and precious before God; and when she presents herself at the tribunal of Jesus Christ, it will be with the sweet confidence of receiving the recompense promised in the Gospel, to those who will have lived in the exercise of works of mercy.

O my divine Saviour ! what thanks shall I render Thee, for having called me, unworthy as I am, to so exalted a Vocation ! Yes, I hope, henceforth, to more fully appreciate Thy infinite goodness towards me ; and I now take the resolution, not to allow a day to pass without thanking Thee for having called me into the Company of the Sisters of Charity.

SECOND POINT. *How should we serve the Poor ?*— We should be as mothers to them ; consequently, we should show that we are happy to bestow, personally, the cares which their condition requires ; and we should guard against transferring this duty to domestics. A Sister who, without necessity, employs others to render assistance to the sick, which she herself could give, shows that she does not appreciate the dignity and sublimity of her Vocation ; and she deprives herself of the precious merits she would have gained by serving them ; and should this frequently occur, she would deserve to be rejected by God, and deprived of a Vocation of which she proves herself unworthy.

A Sister of Charity, says St. Vincent, should serve the Poor with compassion, mildness, respect, and devotion. 1. With compassion. She ought to have for them a heart filled with charity ; she should feel deeply their sorrows, their afflictions, and their sufferings ; and, in some measure share them, after the example of the Apostle who was weak with the weak, who mingled his tears with those who wept, in order the better to console them in their trials and

afflictions.—2. With mildness; that is to say, she should be full of meekness in their regard, bearing patiently with their defects, their importunities, their ill-will, and even the injuries she may receive from them. Her words ought to breathe this spirit of meekness; she should say nothing calculated to humble, sadden, or irritate them.—3. With cordiality. She should not appear before them with a dejected or forbidding countenance; everything in her manner, words, and bearing, should bespeak charity.—4. With respect. She calls the Poor her lords and masters; therefore, let her conduct be in accordance with this title so dear to her heart. Let her treat the Poor as she would treat our Lord, Himself; that in all her actions she may be deferential and attentive.—5. With devotion. Let the services which a Sister of Charity renders to the Poor, be inspired by the spirit of faith, by the desire of pleasing God; in a word, let them be as an exercise of piety. In truth, the principal end she should propose to herself in serving the Poor, should be to convert and sanctify them. She should, therefore, be animated with a great desire to procure their salvation, and do all that depends upon her to bring them to God, if they have had the misfortune of straying from Him—bearing in mind what these souls have cost Jesus Christ. To this effect, she should teach them the principal truths of Religion; above all, such as are necessary by precept, and those of necessity as means; she should teach them to bear their sufferings and

trials with patience ; advise them to make good general confessions, dispose them for a happy death, and be vigilant, that they receive, in time, the Sacraments they need. In a word, she should regard their souls as a deposit intrusted to her by Jesus Christ, and of which she will have to render an account, should they be lost through her fault.

THIRD POINT. *Means to be adopted in order to serve the Poor well.*—The first means, is, frequently to call to mind how we ourselves would wish to be treated were we in their place. Doubtless, we would wish our defects to be borne with, to be spoken to with kindness ; that everything necessary for our comfort would be provided ; that our sufferings would meet with compassion, and that our complaints would be listened to with feelings of tenderness. This, therefore, is the manner in which we should act towards the Poor, since, according to the divine precept, we must love our neighbor as ourselves. The second means, is, to bear constantly in mind that the Poor are our lords and masters, that we are only their servants, and that it is a great honor for us to minister unto them. We should, then, address them as a respectful servant speaks to his master. We should also remember, that these poor people are the children of God,—His beloved children ; and that He has confided them to us, intending that we shall bestow upon them our services and cares, with all the tenderness that prompts a mother to nurse a beloved child.

The third means, is, to be deeply impressed by the words of Jesus Christ: that He considers as done to Himself what you do to the Poor; and that the destitute and afflicted whom you are called to serve, are His suffering members. Oh! if a Sister of Charity were well convinced of this truth, with what eagerness, with what joy, and happiness, would she discharge her duties in the Service of the Poor! Think often of this. When the Poor call on you for something, when you speak to them, when you wait upon them, when you dress their wounds, always behold Jesus Christ in their person.

The fourth means, is, to recall to mind the sentiments of our Lord towards the afflicted, while He was upon earth: "I have compassion on the multitude," said He to His disciples, "for behold, they have now continued with me three days, and have nothing to eat." We know that this divine Saviour mingled His tears with those in distress. Bear in mind, that you are called to imitate Him; always keep your eyes fixed upon Him to copy His great charity.

In fine, a last means, is, to think of the great and magnificent recompense awaiting a good Sister of Charity who will have served the Poor well! Oh! how beautiful will be her crown in heaven! A cup of cold water given in the name of our Lord shall not remain unrewarded; what, therefore, may she not expect, who daily, nay hourly, devotes herself to works of mercy, consecrating thereto her

strength and health, her intelligence, her whole soul! Let us, then, repeat from our heart: Oh! how sublime is our Vocation! How preferable to all earthly dignities, to all the empires of the world! I thank Thee, O my God, for having called me to it!

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Our Holy Rules.

FIRST POINT. *Why should we observe our Holy Rules?*—We should observe them first, because they are the expression of the will of God in our regard. True, they have been given to us by St. Vincent, but this Blessed Father was in this, only the instrument of divine Providence ; he himself declares that he never thought of forming the Company of Sisters of Charity, that it was God, Himself, who did it. Now, if God has established our Community, He is, undoubtedly, the Author of our Rules, since they are the foundation upon which the edifice of our Company rests. God is the author of them, inas-much as, by the grace and light accorded to St. Vincent, He, in some measure, inspired them ; or, at least, He granted special assistance for the accomplishment of this important work. We should, then, regard our Holy Rules, not as the work of man, but the work of God, Himself. Hence, although the Rules do not, of themselves, oblige under pain of sin ; we cannot infringe them without deviating from the order of Providence ;—without acting contrary to the designs of God over us ; and, consequently, without exposing ourselves to the commission of many sins.

We ought to observe our Holy Rules, secondly, because they are the channels by which God wishes to communicate to us the spirit of our Vocation and maintain it within us; He has ordained them for this purpose. Without this spirit, we would be a body without a soul; we would have the appearance, the exterior, the Habit of a Sister of Charity, but we would not, in reality, be Sisters of Charity in the eyes of God.

We ought to observe our Holy Rules, thirdly, in order to succeed in our employments in relation to the poor. How could a Sister expect to succeed in her duties if she neglects to employ the means pointed out by God. Will her own ideas be preferable to the regulations of divine Wisdom? In doing her own will she would deprive herself of the blessing of God, and without this blessing what good could she effect?

We should observe our Holy Rules, fourthly, to preserve the good spirit of the Company; for, a Community in which the Rules are not observed, is in a state of decay, it must perish. Would we subject our Company, which is our Mother, to this condition?

SECOND POINT. *How should we observe our Holy Rules?*—1. With love; for God has given them to us, and given them to us for our good. What a motive to make us love them and place our happiness in the observance of them! By fidelity to our Rules,

we are sure of doing what is pleasing to God. What a consolation !

2. With promptitude : regarding the sound of the bell as the expression of the will of God, and leaving all at the first signal.

3. With great exactitude. There is not a single point of our Holy Rules but comes to us from God ; not one, that may not draw upon us the greatest benedictions, if we obey it. It is in the faithful observance of little things that we testify a true desire to please God ; and to this fidelity, God gives His most abundant graces.

4. We should observe our Holy Rules at all times and in all places ; whether we are alone, or under the eyes of our Superiors, or of our companions. If we act differently, it would be a proof that we did not observe them for God ; and thus we would lose all the merit of our actions.

5. With courage : that is, nothing in the world should prevent us from observing them ; we should be careful not to fail in them through human respect, or through fear of displeasing slothful companions, against the influence of whose pernicious example, we should strengthen ourselves, and not fear their little persecutions. We should have a greater fear of displeasing God than of incurring the displeasure of creatures ; we should bear in mind that Jesus Christ has said : that He would be ashamed of him before His Father, who would blush to acknowledge Him before men. Wo to a

Sister of Charity who neglects her Holy Rules ! Wo to a Sister Servant who does not insist upon the faithful observance of them ! Although they do not oblige under penalty of sin, nevertheless, it is very seldom that those who fail therein do not sin ; because they act through vanity, or sensuality, or, they scandalize others ; or, in fine, because they place themselves in the impossibility of fulfilling a duty binding on the conscience. Moreover, there are points of Rule which prescribe certain things already ordained by the commandments of God, or those of the Church, or are the object of our holy vows.

O my God, I acknowledge that I have been very unfaithful to my Holy Rules ; henceforth, I will strive to observe them all, particularly those which I have so frequently transgressed, as silence ; which, however, is so necessary for the preservation of the interior spirit.

THIRD POINT. *What Means should we adopt for the faithful observance of our Holy Rules ?*—1. We should often consider the precious advantages which they procure us : they are the means of doing penance, of drawing upon us and upon our works the benedictions of God ; they shield us from countless dangers, help us to advance in virtue and in the spirit of our Vocation ; they are a source of merit for heaven ; they enable us to save many souls redeemed by the Blood of Jesus Christ ; in fine, they procure for us a happy death, precious in the sight

of the Lord. Do not these advantages more than compensate for the little sacrifices imposed upon us by the faithful observance of our Rules? 2. To adopt as models, those Sisters who are the most exact, the most virtuous; and to shun the danger of being influenced by those who are less edifying.—3. When we find any difficulty in the observance of a point of Rule, for example, rising at four o'clock, let us not decide for ourselves; but have recourse to our Superiors, begging them to give us the line of conduct we should follow; for very often, under the pretext of shielding our health, or of fulfilling better the duties of our office, we omit habitually, and without sufficient reason, certain exercises of piety.—4. To ask ourselves, from time to time, during the day, the question which St. Bernard constantly put to himself: Why did I come to the Community? Was it not to do the will of God?—5. To listen with religious attention to the reading of the Holy Rules, adding thereto these acts: Thanksgiving to God who vouchsafed to give them to us; regret for having failed in them; a firm purpose to be more exact in future.—6. Every evening, to examine carefully if we have observed all our Holy Rules; to humble ourselves for our failings, and in all sincerity, accuse ourselves of them either in confession, or in presence of our companions.—7. To call to mind, from time to time, that we shall be examined by the Sovereign Judge, on our fidelity in the observance of our Holy Rules;

and to ask of God the grace to avoid all illusion on this important point.

O divine Saviour, who hast given us Rules by the aid of which we are sure never to go astray, and to arrive safely at the port of eternal salvation, vouchsafe to grant us the grace to observe them, henceforth, with the greatest exactitude.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On Humility.

FIRST POINT. *Necessity of Humility.*—1. Humility is necessary in order to render us agreeable to God. He, Himself, declares that the proud are an abomination to Him, that they are hateful in His sight. No sooner does pride enter into the hearts of the Angels, than God precipitates them into hell. The Holy Spirit teaches us that God resists the proud, but gives His grace to the humble. We must, therefore, O my soul, strive to establish ourselves in Humility; for if this virtue does not dwell in us, we shall be in the eyes of God, an object of horror.

2. Humility is absolutely necessary for us, if we wish to be disciples of Jesus Christ. Everywhere this divine Saviour preaches Humility to us: He says: "Learn of me because I am humble of heart." He declares that: He who exalts himself, shall be humbled, and he who humbles himself, shall be

exalted. He recommends us always to choose the last place, to shun honors and dignities. On one occasion, He caused a little child to be placed in the midst of His Apostles, and declared to them that, unless they became as little children, they would never enter the kingdom of heaven. But, the divine Master was not content with giving us lessons of Humility, He confirms them by the most beautiful examples. He annihilates Himself, according to the expression of St. Paul, in taking the form of a slave. His birth, His life, His death, are but a succession of humiliations. He was born in a stable, taking indeed, the last place in coming into the world. During thirty years, He led a hidden life, obedient to His holy Mother and to St. Joseph. During His public life, instead of seeking honors, He fled when the people wished to make Him king, and retired into the desert. Finally, during His Passion, He is so overwhelmed with opprobrium, that, in the eyes of the Prophet, He is but a worm of the earth. Could we say that we are the disciples of such a Master, if, far from profiting by His lessons and example, we yield to pride, vanity, and self-love?

3. Humility is necessary for us, in order that we may be true Daughters of St. Vincent, who declares that Humility is the first of the virtues that constitute our spirit; to show us that it is absolutely necessary, and that it must be the foundation of all other virtues. Hence, he incessantly recommends

it to us in the most express terms. If we have not Humility, we shall never be true Sisters of Charity; we may have the Habit, but not the spirit; we may perform the exterior works of our Vocation, but these will be dead works, or, at least, will be void of merit before God. The greatest misfortune for a Sister of Charity, is, not to labor to establish herself in Humility.

SECOND POINT. *Conditions of true Humility.*—The first condition, says St. Vincent, is, sincerely to despise ourselves, and to be convinced that we merit only the contempt of our equals. We shall enter into these sentiments, if we apply ourselves to consider what we were, what we are now, and what we shall one day become.—What were you a hundred years ago? A mere nothing. What is your body,—that body which has so often been the cause of vanity, and which is still, perhaps, the object of too much solicitude? It is only a little clay which, in a few days, will become the food of worms. The Prophet declares that you were conceived in iniquity and engendered in sin.—What will you one day be? Your body will return to the earth whence it was drawn; but whither will your soul go? Oh! if we reflected on all this, how could we esteem ourselves, how could we desire others to esteem us?

The second condition of Humility, says again St. Vincent, is to rejoice that others know our imperfections, and on this account, despise us. Therefore, we should be pleased when our faults

are perceived, when little attention is paid to us ; when we are slighted, set aside. Alas ! how far are we from these dispositions ! Instead of loving contempt and humiliations, we seek praise and admiration ; those who flatter us, are always graciously welcomed by us, but those who condemn us, meet only with rebuffs on our part ; we cannot endure them, their presence excites in us sentiments of aversion. Instead of bearing patiently the insults, the misconduct of others, we eagerly seize the opportunity to avenge ourselves. Ah ! how remote are we from true Humility !

The third condition of Humility, according to St. Vincent, is, that if God effects any good in us, or by us, we should, as far as possible, conceal it from others ; for, if we are pleased that what we have done be made known to others, it is a proof that we do not act solely for God ; we should also conceal this good from ourselves ; because, if we take complacency in the good we do, we lose the fruit of it. We cannot take any vanity whatever in the good we effect, without rendering ourselves guilty of injustice towards God, because of ourselves, we are not capable of any good. The Apostle declares that all our sufficiency comes from God, and that we are incapable even of a good thought.

Let us beseech St. Vincent to obtain for us the grace to practise true Humility in the manner he has taught us.

THIRD POINT. *Means of acquiring Humility.*—The first means, is, frequently to consider the example of the Saints, and, above all, the truly admirable example which St. Vincent has left us. We know the good he effected during his life, the eminent perfection to which he attained, the works he accomplished, the glory which he procured to God, the souls he saved. And, yet, what idea had he of himself? St. Vincent regarded himself as a useless servant, a great sinner, as the abomination of the universe. Ah! if with so many virtues and so many good works, he entertained such lowly sentiments of himself, what should we think of ourselves, filled with so many miseries, covered with sins, and destitute of virtue?

A second means, is, to exercise great vigilance over our thoughts, words, and actions. 1. Over our thoughts; it does not depend upon us to prevent thoughts of vanity from arising within us; but it does depend upon us not to consent to them. We must reject them, and testify to God the horror with which they inspire us. But, let us not be content with disavowing them, let us make use of them to humble ourselves; and if the demon perceives that we profit by all his attacks to strengthen ourselves more in Humility, he will desist from combats which turn only to his shame and to our profit.—2. Over our words, to avoid every fault contrary to Humility: speaking advantageously of ourselves, seeking to be distinguished by our manner of conversing; appear-

ing witty, wishing to take precedence of others.—3. Over our actions: before commencing them, we should always propose to ourselves the good pleasure of God; while performing them, we should reject every sentiment of complacency, of self-seeking; after completing them, we should refer all the glory to God.

In fine, a last means, is, to apply yourself to acts of this virtue of Humility. Every day, you perform certain exterior acts of Humility, as kissing the floor, etc.; animate these acts by an inward sentiment of Humility. Occasionally you meet with humiliations; accept these with a willing heart; offer them to our Lord, and promptly banish all thoughts of bitterness which would trouble the peace of your soul. Every morning, resolve to perform some acts of Humility; foresee the circumstances attending them, and be firm against the repugnances of nature. You will be obliged to do great violence to yourself in the beginning; but afterwards, these acts will be made with greater facility, and you will enjoy a consolation that will amply indemnify you for all the sacrifices you will have made.

O divine Jesus, meek and humble of heart, deign to bless the resolutions with which Thou hast inspired me during this meditation; and grant me the grace to put them in practice, that I may one day share Thy glory in heaven.

CONSIDERATION.

On the Presence of God.

FIRST POINT. *Motives which should lead us to the Practice of the Presence of God.*—We know that by His immensity, God is present everywhere, and that in Him, as St. Paul says, we live, and move.

But, it is not sufficient that we know and believe this truth ; we should frequently bring the thought of it to mind ; this is a most useful practice. First, it is one of the most efficacious means of avoiding sin. And, in fact, if we dread the looks of a person for whom we have some regard ; if the presence of that person suffices to put us on our guard, because we fear to displease him, should not the thought of God's Presence be much more efficacious ? Where is the Sister of Charity who would commit a sin, were she saying to herself : At this moment God is looking at me, His eyes are fixed upon me ; He is my Judge ; if I commit this fault, He can punish and annihilate me ! He is my Father, and the best of Fathers ; His Heart is always burning with love for me, is always open to receive me, and to shed His benedictions upon me ; how, then, could I grieve Him ! The exercise of the Presence of God is, therefore, an excellent preservative against sin.—Secondly : it is also a means of easily acquiring high perfection ; we cannot doubt this, since God, Himself, says to us in the person of His servant Abraham : “ Walk be-

fore me, and be perfect." A Sister, consequently, who performs all her actions in the Presence of God, will attain perfection in a short time. Is there anything better calculated to warm the heart, to reanimate our languishing fervor, and to excite us to great generosity in the service of God? Alas! we know all this, and yet, we continue to live in a dissipated manner, as if we were not convinced. Ah! what a subject of humiliation for us!

SECOND POINT. *In what does the Practice of the Presence of God consist?*—This practice consists in being well penetrated with the truth that God is everywhere; that He sees us, that He searches the most hidden thoughts of our mind. This consideration should induce us to have recourse to Him in all places, to bless and praise Him; it should preserve us in the greatest modesty, and make us enter into the dispositions of the heavenly Intelligences, who incessantly contemplate Him with hearts penetrated with the deepest respect and love. We may also consider God communicating Himself to us in the use we make of the creatures that have been given to us, whether for our necessities, utility, or pleasure.—Thus, we may reflect that it is God who warms us by the fire He has created; who dissipates the darkness by the light He has made; who nourishes us by the food we take. These considerations may powerfully contribute to augment in our hearts the fire of charity, and inflame us with divine love in a short time. For how could we be other-

wise than pressed to love ardently a God who is so good to us, so attentive to provide for our wants?

But, the most excellent manner of practising the Presence of God, consists in representing Him in the midst of our soul. It is certain, that when we are in the state of grace, God dwells within us; He takes His delight in our hearts, as He declares in the Holy Scripture. St. Paul invites us to glorify God, and to bear Him in our bodies; that is, we should look upon ourselves as the living tabernacles of the true God; we should honor Him as residing in our souls; offer Him continual sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving; we should respect our bodies as consecrated and sanctified by the Presence of God, and always conduct ourselves with great reserve and modesty, as persons who carry God within their hearts. This is the best manner of practising the Presence of God, and we may add, that it is the most useful and the most easy. St. Augustine declares, that after having, in vain, sought God for a long time, out of himself, he found Him at last, within himself. This was the practice of St. Vincent, who so earnestly recommends it to us. Let us examine if we have been faithful to it.

THIRD POINT. *Means to be adopted in the Practice of the Presence of God.*—First means: To avoid dissipation of mind. The eyes, eager to see all things, are the windows of the soul, through which, with the image of exterior objects, dissipation of mind and forgetfulness of God enter into

it. The ears, ever ready to listen, fill the interior with distracting novelties. The tongue, which knows no restraint, robs the heart of sentiments of piety, to such an extent, says St. Augustine, that a great talker is never an interior man. Hence, it follows, that unless we mortify the exterior senses—the eyes, the ears, the tongue—we shall never walk in the Presence of God. But, interior mortification is no less important. If we allow the imagination to be filled with vain and useless thoughts, there will be a tumult within us, less boisterous, perhaps, than that of the world, but none the less disastrous. Hence, with this interior agitation, the practice of the Presence of God is evidently incompatible.

2. The second means, is : To avoid self-seeking in what we do. If we seek ourselves, we shall always find ourselves with all our miseries and imperfections; but, if we seek God purely and simply, we are sure of finding Him. We often complain that our occupations prevent us from being recollected; but the evil does not proceed from this source, but from seeking ourselves in the performance of our duty. This is the cause of our over-anxiety and of the thousand fears and desires that arise within us, and hinder us from finding God. We shall never be so overwhelmed with affairs as St. Vincent was; and yet, his important and multiplied duties, were no hindrance to the practice of the Presence of God. Let us implore this great Saint to impart to us his spirit of recollection.

3. Third means : To determine certain times, and choose some special signs that will recall the Presence of God. In this way, we contract the habit recommended by St. Vincent, of thinking of God at the beginning of our principal actions, and when we hear the clock strike. Let the sight of the Crucifix, of a statue of the Blessed Virgin, of the place where our Lord resides, remind us of the Presence of God. At these moments, in imitation of St. Vincent, let us make some ejaculatory prayer which, coming from the heart, will go straight to God, drawing down upon us the grace of recollection. This is the means of keeping our mind ever directed to God ; because each pious aspiration increases in the soul the sacred fire of charity.

4. Fourth means : To observe faithfully the Rule of silence. The Holy Spirit, in speaking of the faithful soul, says : " I will lead her into solitude and there I will speak to her heart." The Rule of silence well observed, transforms each of our Houses into a solitude wherein the Holy Spirit wishes to converse with us. In order to hear Him when He speaks, we must refrain from useless conversation with creatures ; this is the best disposition for entertaining ourselves with God. Oh ! how necessary is silence !

Let us examine if we have been faithful in employing these divers means in order to establish ourselves in the practice of the Presence of God.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On Simplicity.

FIRST POINT. *Why should we practise Simplicity?*—1. Because this virtue has been earnestly recommended by our divine Saviour: “Be ye simple as doves,” says this amiable Master to us. O my divine Saviour, I wish to give myself to Thee to practise this beautiful virtue. But, our Lord is not content to recommend it, He declares that it is necessary: “Unless you become as little children,” says He to us, “you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.”

2. Because St. Vincent tells us, that this virtue is one of the three that constitute the spirit of our Vocation. True village-girls, says this Blessed Father, are extremely simple; they employ no artifice, no words of double meaning; and they believe simply what you tell them. In this, you should imitate them; for you will never be true Daughters of Charity, if you are not perfectly simple. Why is this virtue so necessary for us? Because we are called to labor among the poor and ignorant, and there is no better means to succeed, than by Simplicity. Oh! how much good will not a Sister of Charity effect, if she possesses Simplicity! Those whom she serves will always be disposed to listen to her; they will believe all she says, because they will be convinced that she does not try to deceive

them; that in all her words and actions, she does not seek herself, but only God; and, because she seeks God alone in all things, He, on His part, will bless her in all her undertakings, and give success to all she does.

3. We should practise Simplicity because of the precious advantages it procures us. The Holy Spirit tells us that God is pleased to converse with the simple, to entertain Himself with them, as a friend with a friend. Oh! what a happiness for a Sister of Charity to have it in her power to enjoy the most intimate communications with her God! We are well aware that these communications are a source of the sweetest consolations and of the most abundant graces! She will be in the condition of our first parents in the garden of Paradise, when God was pleased to hold converse with them. O my God! Thou who hast so much recommended the beautiful virtue of Simplicity to us, make us comprehend the precious advantages attached thereto, and inspire us with great horror for every kind of duplicity.

SECOND POINT. *Simplicity of heart, or Purity of Intention.*—Simplicity of heart requires that we seek God alone in all things. For this reason, St. Francis de Sales calls Simplicity, a pure act of the love of God. This state may be called an Angelic state, a state entirely divine, since we become like to God, who has no other end than Himself. It may also be termed an anticipated paradise, because

we do upon earth what the Saints already do in heaven. Oh! how happy the Sisters of Charity who are simple, since they live the life of Angels, even the life of God, Himself, and commence their paradise upon earth! Simplicity of heart makes us forget ourselves entirely, to seek only the interests of God. Oh! happy inspiration, which makes all our actions meritorious for heaven, and by which we daily amass new treasures!—Simplicity of heart prevents over-nicety in regard to exercises of piety; it goes simply and honestly to God, casting itself at His feet, as a child in the arms of its mother; and, as it seeks only the good pleasure of God, it is ever contented, whether God sends the sweetness of His consolations, or tries it by aridity.

A Sister of Charity who possesses this virtue of Simplicity, listens with love to the word of God, and meditates thereon in silence, without considering who preaches, or his manner of delivery; it is enough for her that it is the word of God, consequently, she receives it with respect and a holy avidity; she guards against making it the subject of criticism or of pleasantry. In her confessions, she acknowledges her faults with candor, never seeking to make herself less guilty than she is; she receives with docility the advices given to her, and is eager to put them in practice. She does not seek herself in the choice of confessors; she sees only God in their person, and she reaps the most abundant fruit from her confessions. If she reads,

it is not to become more learned, but to become better; she wants but few books; she reads but little at a time, and meditates a great deal. O Jesus, grant us this Simplicity of heart!

THIRD POINT. *Simplicity in Words and Actions.*—Simplicity in words consists in saying things just as they are, without equivocation or restriction. A Sister of Charity who possesses this spirit of Simplicity, speaks truthfully, exactly as she thinks, unless prudence dictates silence; she then maintains a wise reserve, but never says anything contrary to what she thinks. She has as great a horror of lying, as of the gates of hell. She avoids all kinds of flattery, in order to gain the affection of any one; she guards against affectation in her manner of speaking, and shuns all that betrays research in her conversation.

2. Simplicity in action makes a Sister of Charity avoid all manner of subterfuge in what she does, acting with great candor. She is simple in her dress, avoiding all over-nicety; simple in her gait, shunning all worldly airs assumed by those who are desirous to please; simple in her manners, which are always accompanied with great modesty. She is not haughty or domineering over her inferiors, she is distinguished only by her kindness and charity. With regard to her Superiors she is like a child, opening her heart to them with the most charming frankness. If they give her a command, she obeys immediately; she is ignorant of all delays;

she does not consider if the order she receives be agreeable or otherwise, if Superiors were right or wrong in commanding her; if they commanded with harshness or sweetness: she knows only how to obey.

Oh! how rarely do we find souls in possession of this true Simplicity! Let us examine how we stand in regard to the practice of this virtue. Doubtless, in reflecting attentively upon ourselves, we shall be forced to acknowledge that we have been wanting in this virtue, that we have committed many faults against it; we must deplore these faults, and resolve, in future, to avoid them. O divine Saviour, who didst come upon earth to withdraw us from the path that leads to perdition, and who didst point out Simplicity as an infallible means of avoiding it, deign to bestow this beautiful virtue upon us; grant that our hearts, captivated with the charms which it contains, may ardently desire to acquire it; that we may seek but Thee, O Jesus, who shouldst be the only object of our love.

EIGHTH DAY.

FIRST MEDITATION.

On Charity.

FIRST POINT. *Particular reasons that oblige us to practise Fraternal Charity.*—1. We are Daughters of Charity. “They shall often think of the name of Daughters of Charity which they have the honor to bear, say our Holy Rules, and endeavor to render themselves worthy of it, by a true and sincere love for God and their neighbor; above all, they shall cherish one another. O my Saviour, what more beautiful name could be found than that of Daughter of Charity! Is there any to be compared to it? O my Sisters, what a motive to give yourselves to God to become worthy of so glorious a title,” exclaims St. Vincent.—2. We are Daughters of St. Vincent, and St. Vincent is the apostle of Charity, the Patron of all charitable associations. If we do not love one another, we shall be unworthy to have such a Father; he would not own us for his Daughters.—3. We are Sisters; and, as our Holy Rules say, our Lord has assembled us for His service. But if, in a family, sisters according to nature, are instinctively inclined to love one another, should not we who are united by ties far more excellent, have for one another a true, sincere, and

supernatural affection?—4. We are spouses of Jesus Christ. But what is the great precept of the divine Saviour? Is it not Charity? Does He not tell us that His disciples will be recognized by this mark? Without Charity, we cannot call ourselves Christians; how, then, could we assume to ourselves the glorious title of spouses of Jesus Christ?—5. God has called and assembled us to honor our Lord Jesus Christ as the source and model of all Charity. What! after such a Vocation, would we not have the Charity even of an ordinary Christian! But this would be an outrage all the more afflicting to the Heart of Jesus, because of the glorious designs He has over us.—6. All our life is to be consecrated to works of Charity, proving to the poor that we love them; and shall we not love our companions who are associated with us for the performance of these works? We are obliged to exercise Charity abroad, shall we not practise it at home! Besides, how could we otherwise hope for the blessing of God! Devoid of the life-giving sap that renders our works of mercy fruitful, we would be but as sounding brass and tinkling cymbal; we might, indeed, make a noise in the world, but we would not produce the fruits of the Gospel.

Ah! let us enter into ourselves, and let us be convinced that fraternal Charity is of the highest importance in our Community; let us be disposed to make every sacrifice in order to establish and

preserve it. Moreover, is not this the charm of a Community life?

SECOND POINT. *Characteristics of Fraternal Charity.*—1. It should be sincere and efficacious ; that is, we must have a true love for our companions : wish for them all the good they desire, and procure it for them as far as depends upon us. Let us not resemble those void of affection, who, provided nothing is wanting to themselves, are little concerned for others. Let it be our delight to serve our Sisters ; let us eagerly embrace the occasion of giving them pleasure ; and, far from being jealous of their success and of the esteem in which they are held, let us rejoice therein.

2. Our Charity should be cordial. In a Community, the members should have but one heart and one soul, as was the case among the Christians of the primitive Church : we must, then, weep with those who weep, and rejoice with those who rejoice. In this mutual communication of sentiments, consists that cordiality which renders the Community life so sweet, so delightful, that, according to St. Vincent, it is a paradise on earth.

3. Our Charity should be generous ; that is, we should be ready to sacrifice our ease, our convenience, our personal views, for the sake of others. Hence arises mutual support. Oh ! how necessary is this mutual support for persons living together ! For, each one has her defects, and imperfections ; inclinations and dispositions differ ; judgments and manner

of viewing things are far from being the same ; tastes vary, and wills conflict. Hence, in the midst of these divers and contrary elements, union of hearts becomes an impossibility, without mutual support ; without a reciprocal pardon of weaknesses, and a loving and patient endurance of whatever is disagreeable to us,—to what is opposed to our taste, to our humor. This is the reason why St. Vincent bids us repeat daily the words of the great Apostle : “Bear ye one another’s burdens, and thus you will fulfil the law of Jesus Christ.” Let us examine our disposition in regard to this mutual forbearance.

4. Our Charity should be universal. If, according to the Gospel precept, we cannot exclude anyone from our Charity, even our enemies, how could we entertain sentiments of aversion, resentment, or antipathy against our companions ?

5. Our Charity should be supernatural. An affection based only upon mutual sympathy would not be meritorious for heaven ; and, should this affection be transformed into particular friendship, it would not fail to produce in us disastrous consequences, considered in a threefold point of view : the love of God, fraternal union, and the angelic virtue. We must, then, entertain for our companions a love which has God for its principle and object ; and so regulate our mutual intercourse as to edify one another by our words and actions.

Let us consider if we are in possession of these different characteristics ; if we find that any are

wanting, let us make generous efforts to acquire them.

THIRD POINT. *Means of preserving Fraternal Charity.*—We must entertain a high esteem for this virtue which Jesus Christ has recommended to us in so forcible a manner ; and often recall the admirable examples He has given us of it during His whole life, and, above all, at His death. These examples should be ever before our eyes, and serve as rules in our intercourse with our neighbor ; since, before quitting His Apostles, our Saviour said : “ My little children, I give you my commandment, that you love one another, as I have loved you.” This was the last will, the testament of this divine Saviour, by which He bequeathed to us the precious heritage of Charity ! Let us preserve it as the richest of all treasures.—2. We should avoid interfering with the conduct of our companions or with their offices. Let each one apply herself to fulfil her duty with all possible perfection, and peace will dwell among us.—3. To combat aversions with courage, and not suffer ourselves to be overcome by our bad nature ; but vigorously resist it, and manifest the greatest kindness and cordiality towards those against whom we have any ill-feeling ;—never shunning their society, which would increase the evil instead of removing it.—4. To be on our guard against slanders, even in the smallest points, as well as against those false reports which cause disunion ; bearing in mind these words of the Apostle, St. James :

“He who sins not by the tongue, is a perfect man.”—

5. To avoid all contention ; and if any opposition arises, to practise condescension, acquiescing as far as possible, in regard to the opinion and will of others.—6. To ask pardon, when we have given pain to our companions. “My Daughters, says St. Vincent, here is a powerful means to maintain and preserve union and cordiality among you : When you perceive that you have caused displeasure to another, ask pardon immediately, if possible ; but, at latest, before retiring ; for, mark well, if you go to rest in your ill-humor or your anger, you will be guilty of a great fault. . . . As long as this practice is in vigor among you, peace will remain undisturbed.”

These are the means which will contribute to preserve and augment peace among us. O divine Saviour, who hast taught us true Charity, grant us the grace to form but one heart and one soul, even to our last sigh ; that we may merit to be consummated in Charity during all eternity.

SECOND MEDITATION.

On the Happiness of Heaven.

FIRST POINT. *Let us represent to ourselves a good Sister of Charity, at the moment she enters Heaven.*—What a happy exchange for her ! She sees herself enveloped in light, and transported into a place of delights. The veil which concealed the Divinity

from her, is removed ; the Angels, in the twinkling of an eye, have carried her soul into the eternal palace, and presented her before the throne of God. Jesus Christ full of kindness and bounty, invites her to adorn herself with the crown of glory which her services to the poor have merited ; to take her seat upon the brilliant throne prepared for her ; and to enjoy the happiness reserved for all those who have walked faithfully in His footsteps. Come, says He to her, hasten, my beloved ; fear not, for you have served me with fidelity, and have had no other desire than to please me. Come, for winter, that is to say, the time of trouble, is past ; the rains, that is the season of sorrow, grief, suffering, and tears, are dried up ; the time of joy and happiness has come ; spring has arrived, and the earth is covered with flowers.

What a sweet surprise for this good Sister of Charity ! Behold her now at the summit of happiness ; she has heard the voice of her God, of her divine Spouse, whom she has so loved on earth, and who is now to inebriate her with His delights. She beholds the splendor of the Holy City ; she hears the canticles of joy and the ravishing harmonies, by which the blessed manifest their happiness. In transports of love, she contemplates, with rapture, the innumerable choirs of the Saints. She sees all her good companions who have preceded her, and who invite her to come and take a place amongst them ; she sees St. Vincent who advances, to acknowledge

her for his Daughter; she sees the Immaculate Mary, the Queen of Heaven, seated at the right hand of her Son; in fine, she sees God, Himself, as an ocean of glory and light. Behold her, then, delivered from all the miseries of this world. She has found peace, joy, happiness, and security; she is now in the possession of all her desires.

Contemplating this spectacle, we are lost in admiration, and each one of us exclaims: By what means can I secure this triumphant admission into the heavenly Jerusalem? From the height of Heaven, this holy Daughter of Charity replies: After my example, love God with all your heart, serve the poor with ardor and generosity; be animated with the spirit of your Vocation, and you will enter gloriously into the eternal tabernacles.

SECOND POINT. *Let us consider the Happiness reserved for us in Heaven.*—Heaven is the house of God, the place where He displays His magnificence, where He shines in all the splendor of His glory; where, if we may so speak, He exhausts the effects of His liberality in favor of His friends. How shall we be able to form an idea of this abode so full of charms? Oh! beauty ever ancient and ever new! Oh! delights of Heaven! St. Paul declares: that the eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived the great things that God has prepared for those who love Him. As far as the heavens are above the earth, so far do the delights of Heaven exceed those we enjoy here below. For the happi-

ness of Heaven consists in the possession of God. Yes, we shall see God, we shall incessantly contemplate Him, and this sight will penetrate us most intimately with love for this inestimable Good, whom it will be our felicity to possess eternally. Our life will be only joy, love, praise, and thanksgiving. The Holy Spirit invites us to partake of the joys of the celestial Jerusalem: "Rejoice with her, He says, O all you that love her; rejoice for joy with her, that you may be filled with her consolations, and flow with delights from the abundance of her glory." The holy Prophet King speaks to us in terms no less admirable: "Who can comprehend how great is the multitude of Thy sweetness, O Lord, which Thou hast hidden for them that fear Thee! Thou shalt protect them in Thy tabernacle from the contradiction of tongues; blessed are they that dwell in Thy house, they shall praise Thee for ever and ever; Thou wilt surround them with glory, Thou wilt make them abound with joy, Thou wilt satiate all their desires, Thou wilt inebriate them with a torrent of delights. Blessed is the people whose Lord is their God!"

But all that holy writers tell us, is far below the reality. The prophet Isaias, who speaks of it in such magnificent terms, fears not to say: Thou only, O Lord, knowest the riches Thou hast in reserve for those that love Thee. The beloved disciple had contemplated Jesus Christ upon Thabor; and yet, when he wishes to speak of Heaven, he can

only say : “ Dearly beloved, it hath not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that we shall be like to God, and we shall see Him as He is.” The Apostle, St. Paul, had been ravished to the third Heaven ; but feeling that he could say nothing approaching the reality, contents himself, in his Epistle to the Ephesians, by praying the Lord to enlighten them, that they might comprehend the riches and glory which He communicates to His Saints. Let us also beg Him to shed His light in our souls, to make us comprehend the object of our hopes, that we may no longer be cold and languishing in our desire for Heaven ; but, being convinced of the nothingness and vanity of everything upon earth, we may, henceforth, sigh only for our heavenly country.

THIRD POINT. *What should we do to attain Heaven?*—Since we cannot find true happiness but in the possession of God, we must make every exertion to attain it. The first thing we have to do, is to excite in our hearts great desires of Heaven ; for we shall attain it only inasmuch as we ardently desire it, for the kingdom of Heaven suffers violence. We must sigh continually for this heavenly country. —We must, secondly, labor according to the spirit of our Vocation, in order to merit so great a happiness. Let us, then, strive to perform all our actions well, with the purest and most elevated intentions. Let us not shrink from labor, for we have to deal with a Master who recompenses generously. The

more abundantly we shall have sown, the more blessings and glory we shall reap. If the elect could experience any sadness in Heaven, it would be for not having served God with greater generosity.—We must, thirdly, suffer with patience, with courage, even with joy, all the pains, trials, and contradictions, which may befall us. We shall have much to suffer before we reach the term of our exile ; but we should not lose sight that sufferings are the way that conducts to Heaven ; for, says the Apostle, St. Paul, it is only by many tribulations that we shall enter the kingdom of Heaven. All the Saints had to suffer ; the life of Jesus Christ was a constant cross and martyrdom.—We should, fourthly, wage continual war against the enemies of our salvation ; for no one will be crowned, says the Apostle, who will not have fought valiantly and gained the victory. The enemies whom we have to combat, are the devil, the world, and our passions which continually incite us to evil, and against which we should be ever on our guard. Now, in these struggles, we need only courage and good will ; with these dispositions, the grace of God will not be wanting ; it will strengthen us and lead us to victory. O Jesus, grant us grace, through the intercession of Thy Immaculate Mother, who is also ours, to support us in the way that conducts to Heaven.

CONSIDERATION.

On Particular Examens.

FIRST POINT. *Importance of the Particular Examen.*—There is this difference between the general Examen and the particular one: that the former includes all the sins we have committed during the day, or within the space of time decreed upon; whereas, the particular Examen is upon a special subject; for example, a certain vice, a virtue, an exercise, and, particularly, the predominant defect which is our weak point in which we are most exposed to danger. This exercise is of the highest importance, 1. Because, it is a measure of prudence to take the greatest precaution where our salvation is most endangered; now, every one has in his soul a weak point which the demon makes an object of attack; imitating in this, the general of an army, who, seeking to take a city, studies the weakest parts, directing thereto all his efforts.—2. Because, when we give our attention to all our miseries at the same time, we accomplish less, than if all its energy were concentrated upon one special subject.—3. Because, when the principal fault is overcome, we shall easily destroy all the others;—as an army is speedily routed, when the general is slain.

Let us here examine our conscience: Have we hitherto attached sufficient importance to the particular Examen? Have we employed the requisite

attention to seek out our least faults on the subject that forms the matter of our Examen. Have we not sometimes been negligent, because we did not duly appreciate its importance? In consequence of this negligence, have we not failed to correct our defects, and to advance in virtue? How can we remain in this state of indifference? If we do not make any serious effort to correct our predominant fault, or to acquire the virtue of which we are most in need, would we not, consequently, be in a state of tepidity? Hence, all masters of the spiritual life, recommend the particular Examen as one of the most powerful means of sanctification; therefore, St. Vincent requires that we make it twice a day.

SECOND POINT. *Manner of making the Particular Examen.*—1. It is necessary to determine the subject; that is, to have a special practice adapted to the needs of the soul. Before choosing this practice, we should attentively examine our dispositions in the presence of God; if we find that we are subject to a predominant fault which is the cause of many other sins, and is a great obstacle to our sanctification, we must resolve, at once, seriously to attack it. If we perceive that the principal need of the soul is to acquire or strengthen a certain virtue, we must direct all our efforts to this point. But, to avoid all illusion and to be more sure that, in so important a matter, we act by the spirit of God, we should impart our thoughts to our Director in our spiritual communication, and receive from him our practice.

2. The subject once decided, we must proceed to the practice of it, considering the necessity of being faithful thereto. We may say to ourselves : This is my predominant fault, the great enemy of my soul ; if I do not conquer it, I shall be exposed to the danger of being lost.

3. We must, at each particular Examen, see if we have been exact to our practice. If we have been faithful, let us give thanks to God ; if we have been guilty of any fault, let us ask pardon and resolve to do better in future. But, above all, let us strive to conceive a true regret for the faults committed against our practice, as well as for the negligence to which we may have yielded in regard to it. It will be well to impose upon ourselves some penance which, as far as possible, should be medicinal ; for example : some acts of charity for having failed in charity ; acts of mortification for having yielded to immortification ; some humiliations for having failed in humility.

4. Besides our particular Examen on this subject, we must refer every thing to this practice ; for example : in meditation, take the resolution to be faithful to it, and resolve to perform a certain number of acts in connection with it, at certain fixed times : during the day, to be very vigilant in regard to this practice ; every day, to offer some special prayer to obtain the grace of being faithful to it ; in fine, to act in such a manner, as to prove that we

are determined to attain the end proposed by our practice.

5. It will also be useful to devote some time at the end of each week, and, above all, in the monthly Retreat, to consider how we have observed our practice during the days past; what progress we have made in it, what obstacles we have encountered, and in what manner we have surmounted them.

THIRD POINT. *Means of making the Particular Examen well.*—1. It must be made with recollection and in the spirit of faith. I would wish to make my particular Examen well, you may say, but I cannot recollect myself; the time allotted for this exercise passes without my perceiving it, and consequently, I do not profit by it. Whence is it, that you cannot recollect yourself? Is it not because you live in habitual dissipation? Therefore, you should strive to establish yourself in recollection. Moreover, as soon as the bell announces the time for the particular Examen, you should leave everything to obey the call of God, saying to yourself: What am I going to do, and how should I do it? On arriving at the place destined for this exercise, place yourself in the presence of Jesus Christ, and call to mind that our divine Saviour will one day demand of you an account of your conduct.

2. You must avoid discouragement into which certain persons are liable to fall, on account of the faults they still commit. They say: Since I have applied myself to overcome this defect, it seems to

me that I commit many more faults than before. This should not alarm you. It is possible that you may be more strongly tempted ; but this is a proof that the demon, fearing to be vanquished by the means you adopt to resist him, is enraged against you ; but, is not this a good sign ? Is it true, however, that you do commit more faults than formerly ? You now discover a greater number, because you examine yourself ; but hitherto you committed more, without perceiving them.

3. We must persevere in combating our predominant fault, fully confident that, in time, we shall destroy it. A Sister may say : Alas ! I have been laboring six months for the acquisition of this virtue. Ah ! even if you have labored for this end six years, thirty years, you must not desist, but say to yourself : Whatever it may cost me, I will, with the help of God, obtain it ; and should I have to struggle all my life, I will vigorously resist ; convinced, that in the end, I shall be victorious. This determination is always useful. Sometimes, it is true, we may not acquire the special virtue we propose to ourselves, but God bestows upon us another more useful to us ; but every effort we make to attain the desired virtue, procures for us a new degree of glory in heaven. Sometimes we resemble those seamen who row against wind and tide ; they do not advance, it is true, but it is a great deal in their favor that they are not pushed back. Persevere, then, in order not to fall back ;

and in the end, God will bless your efforts ; and, later, you will make more progress in a few days, than you could have hoped for in ten years.

THIRD MEDITATION.

On the Blessed Virgin.

FIRST POINT. *We should love Mary because she is our Mother.*—How sweet, consoling, and advantageous is devotion to Mary ! At the sole name of Mary, the heart dilates, hope is reanimated, joy fills our soul, because it recalls Her who is justly styled our Advocate, our Refuge, the Cause of our joy, our Life, our Sweetness, and our Hope. Wo to the soul that loves not Mary ! On the contrary, happy is she who feels within her heart a tender and generous love for this good and compassionate Mother. Yes, Mary is our Mother ; for in bringing into the world her divine Son, Jesus, our Saviour, she has given us the life of grace,—a life incomparably more precious than the life of the body.—Mary is also our Mother, because on Calvary, she brought us forth to the life of grace, in offering her divine Son as a Victim of propitiation for the salvation of the world ; and, in immolating herself through love for us, she became our Co-Redemptrix. Oh ! how much did this title cost her !—In fine, Mary is also our Mother, because Jesus Christ, from the height of His Cross, on the point of expiring, said to His

beloved disciple, and in his person, to all Christians : Behold thy Mother. These are sacred words, they could not fail to effect what they signify. Therefore, from this moment, Mary, by a new title, became our Mother, and we, her children. Now, should not a child love his mother? He who is destitute of this love is an unnatural son. What, then, should be our love for Mary, this Mother so good, so loving, so tender, and, at the same time, so powerful, so exalted in dignity !

Mary has for us all the tenderness of a mother for her child. But this is not saying enough : her tenderness surpasses all the affection and devotedness of the best of mothers. When our divine Saviour gave Mary to us for a Mother, He bequeathed to us all the love she had for Him. In saying to her : Woman, behold thy son, He seemed to say : I know, O my Mother, how much thou dost cherish me ; I know that nothing can equal the love thou bearest me ; but, henceforth, bestow all thy tenderness on my disciples ; they are thy children, as they are mine ; thou wilt then love them, as thou hast loved me. From that moment, Mary has redoubled her affection for us ; she loves us with the same love with which she loved her divine Son. But, since Mary is so good and compassionate towards us, is it not just that we should entertain sentiments of filial piety towards her? And, as no mother has so much tenderness for her children as Mary, is it not also just, that our love

for her should surpass that of the most devoted children for the most tender of mothers?

SECOND POINT. *We should love Mary because of the Graces she continually obtains for us.*—God was not satisfied with giving us, through Mary, the source of salvation, in selecting her to be the Mother of our Saviour; He also appointed her to make the application of the merits of this divine Redeemer to us; for this reason, the Fathers of the Church call Mary the Treasury of grace; this made St. Bernard affirm, that it is the will of God we should receive all graces from the hands of Mary. Now, if such is the case, from whom did you receive the grace of your Vocation, if not from Mary? Yes, it was Mary who obtained it for you; you were but a child; and already, casting a look of complacency upon you, she commenced to prepare you for the accomplishment of the designs of God over you. Later, she inspired you with the thought of consecrating yourself to the service of her Son, in the person of the poor; she it was, who aided you to surmount the obstacles which the demon, the world, and the flesh, opposed to your generous design; taking you by the hand, she withdrew you from the world and conducted you into your beloved Community. Since the moment you entered it, how many graces has she not obtained for you! How many times has she not spoken to your heart by her inspirations! from how many dangers has

she not preserved you ! Did ever a mother bestow so much care upon a beloved child ?

But the goodness and charity of Mary in your regard, are not yet exhausted ; what she has heretofore done for you, she will continue to do until your death. You are a Sister of Charity ; consequently you should be all burning with the love of God. To whom will you have recourse in order to enkindle in your heart this beautiful flame of charity ? Behold, Mary who presents herself to you, saying : I am the Mother of Fair Love and of holy hope ; come to me, I will impart to you this sacred fire with which I am wholly filled. Approach her then, frequently, to inflame your heart with the sacred fire of charity ; the greater your devotion to this powerful Mediatrix, the more will the love of God increase within your soul. Mary will obtain for you the grace to acquire the spirit of your Vocation, and of persevering therein till your death, which she will render sweet and consoling ; she will defend you from all the fears which the powers of hell will excite in your soul ; thus, you will die in peace in the arms of Mary, and your death will be followed by an eternity of glory and happiness.

THIRD POINT. *What should you do to prove your love for Mary ?* You should, first, celebrate her feasts with true devotion. You should be careful to prepare for them, and enter into the spirit of the Church in honoring the mystery commemorated in these solemnities. There is nothing sweeter, more

consoling, more instructive and edifying, than the feasts of Mary. If you endeavor to celebrate them in a proper manner, they will be for you an abundant source of graces and consolations.

In the second place, you should acquit yourself well of the exercises of piety prescribed by your Rule in honor of Mary. Have recourse to her with a holy eagerness, and ask for all graces you need. Invoke her in your trials, in your temptations, in all your sufferings ; pray to her with humble confidence, and you will experience the truth of these words of St. Augustine and of St. Bernard : That it has never been known that anyone had recourse to her in vain.

You should, in the third place, endeavor to imitate her virtues. Could Mary recognize you for her child, if you do not take her for your model ? Often reflect upon her humility, her simplicity, charity, and modesty ; upon her obedience and poverty ; upon her great love for the beautiful virtue of purity ; upon her compassion for the afflicted, upon her tender love for God. Cast your eyes frequently upon this beautiful model, and strive to imitate it. If Mary sees that you are animated with a holy emulation to copy her virtues, she will regard you with complacency, and procure for you all the graces you ask of her.

Fourthly, you should endeavor to inspire others with sincere devotion towards Mary. A fervent Sister of Charity desires to see her loved by every one ; she delights to speak of her to her companions ;

she exhorts sinners to have recourse to her powerful intercession ; she seeks to inspire little children with this devotion ; she teaches them that they have a Mother in heaven, to whom they should pray with confidence and love. In fine, you should, above all, love her yourself, not in an indifferent manner, but with all your heart. You should be devotedly attached to her ; her name should be ever upon your lips ; for devotion to Mary ought to be the characteristic devotion of a Sister of Charity.

Note.—It would be well, according to the Custom of the Mother-House, to make this little act of consecration, kneeling, immediately before the conclusion of the Meditation.

O Mary, the purest of Virgins, the most beautiful and the most perfect of God's creatures ! O the most tender, the best of Mothers, how can I live without loving thee ! It seems to me that I love thee, my Mother, and that, after God, thou art the chief object of my love. But, I feel that I do not love thee as much as thou deservest, as much as I desire to love thee ; therefore, I prostrate myself now at the foot of thy throne, to consecrate myself entirely to thee, and to declare to thee, that I wish to be thine hereafter. I offer thee my poor heart, that it may please thee to fill it with love for thee. Vouchsafe to receive it, O holy Virgin, and remove from it all that is displeasing to thee ; deign to inspire it with a love for all thou didst love upon

earth ; that, loving only what thou didst love, I may in all things be conformable to thee and to thy divine Son ; and deserve, one day, to contemplate thee, with Him, in heaven. Amen.

NINTH DAY.

MEDITATION.

On Perseverance.

FIRST POINT. *Motives of Perseverance.*—Our Lord promises paradise to those only who persevere in the practice of virtue until death: “He who shall persevere to the end, shall be saved”; and St. Paul adds: “He only shall be crowned who shall have lawfully fought.” During these days of Retreat, God shed His graces upon you with a bountiful profusion. Were you to abuse these graces; were you to remain in the same state of tepidity and imperfection as heretofore, what account would you not have to render, one day, to your Sovereign Judge? You have taken good resolutions, but that is not enough; in order to persevere, you must make constant and generous efforts, that you may gain the victory over the enemies of your salvation; namely, the demon and yourself.

The demon will do all in his power to make you relapse into your former infidelities; he will put a thousand obstacles in your way to make you fall; he will multiply temptations to weary your patience, and lead you to discouragement. With the help of God you can resist him; but, if you are so weak as

to listen to his suggestions, your condition will be worse than before. You must, then, be on your guard, and adopt certain measures, that the devil may not rob you of the fruits of your Retreat.

We should mistrust ourselves, and guard against our weakness and our natural inconstancy. Experience of the past should serve as a lesson for the future. In effect, what earnest resolutions have we not taken in preceding Retreats! We were all on fire; it appeared that nothing could arrest us in our course,—the greatest sacrifices seemed easy; but alas! all this ardor was cooled by the most trifling obstacles. This we may have remarked during the days just past.

We should, then, guard against all these dangers; and be convinced that it is time to give ourselves to God; to put an end to these alternations of fervor and of negligence, which deter us from making any progress in perfection, and which will eventually, drag us into a state of indifference for the things of our salvation. Alas! O Lord, I acknowledge that hitherto I have been unfaithful to the good inspirations with which Thou hast favored me,—that I have abused Thy graces. Ah! suffer me not to abuse those granted me during this Retreat. Deign, O my God, to assist me by Thy grace; fortify me against the demon and against my own weakness; that nothing may entice me from the path in which I have taken the resolution to walk.

SECOND POINT. *First means of Perseverance: To sincerely love our Vocation.*—A Daughter of St. Vincent who does not love her Vocation, does everything with indifference and negligence; she does not taste the sweets and consolations attached to it; hence, she gradually falls away. On the contrary, a Sister of Charity who loves her Vocation, delights in fulfilling the duties thereof; she does all with relish, and God daily sheds His choicest benedictions upon her. We must, then, love and esteem our Vocation, as well as all that relates to it. We should regard it as our Ark of salvation; as a vessel in which we have nothing to fear, and by the aid of which we shall escape the perils of this life, and reach the desired port of celestial beatitude. We should repulse with horror all the temptations that might arise on this point, begging of God the strength to overcome them; revealing them to our Superiors, that they may indicate the means to enable us to gain the victory over them.

But, it is not enough to love our Vocation; we must love our Works and our Rules. How beautiful are these Works! They are the same as those which Jesus Christ exercised while upon earth. What! poor Sisters of Charity to do what Jesus Christ has done: to comfort the afflicted, to instruct the poor! Ah! what an honor, what a happiness for us! Ah! Lord, what have we done to merit so great a favor? We should, then, love

the duties of our holy Vocation, and perform them with great zeal. We should also, love the Rules which God has given us, because they are the infallible means to secure all the advantages attached to our Vocation. These are the wings whereby we may elevate ourselves to the highest perfection; we shall find in them efficacious remedies for all our evils. Oh! may it please God to grant us the grace to love them, and always observe them with the utmost fidelity!

O my God, grant that the affection and esteem we ought to have for our holy Vocation may ever increase; that we may sanctify ourselves, and reap all the precious advantages attached to our holy calling.

THIRD POINT. *Second means of Perseverance: To labor to perfect ourselves in the spirit of our Vocation.*—We should labor for this all our life, even to our last sigh; and labor courageously and without relaxation, as if we were but commencing. We should not be deterred by difficulties, for God will be with us to help us in overcoming them. But, what is the spirit of our Vocation? It is the very spirit of Jesus Christ, Himself: we must speak, think, and act as He did.—It is a spirit of humility which should make us place ourselves beneath every one, discarding all vain-glory, ostentation, all self-seeking.—It is a spirit of simplicity which prompts us to act purely and simply for God, avoiding all kind of duplicity and affectation.—It is a spirit of charity which makes us love one another, bear with

one another, as Sisters whom Jesus Christ has united by the bonds of His love.—It is a spirit of charity which makes us love God in the highest degree, seeking only what relates to His glory and interest.—It is a spirit of poverty which detaches us from the goods of this world, that God may be our sole treasure.—It is a spirit of obedience which leads us to destroy our own will entirely ; and to will, to desire, only the good pleasure of God manifested to us by the orders of our Superiors.—It is a spirit of chastity which, after having renounced all terrestrial and carnal affections, makes us seek only spiritual joys, and begin to live a life entirely heavenly.—It is a spirit of compassion which makes us as sensitive to the trials and sorrows of the poor, as if they were our own, leading us to do all in our power to soothe them.—It is a spirit of patience, which gives us strength to practise mutual forbearance ;—a spirit of mildness which enables us to gain hearts to God ;—a spirit of faith, a spirit of recollection, leading us to walk in the holy presence of God,—acting always for God and in union with Him.

Such is the spirit of the Sisters of Charity. Oh ! let us beg of God to give it to us, to strengthen and perfect us in it. O divine Saviour, who hast formed our Company, that it may continue the works of mercy which Thou didst exercise during Thy mortal life ; and who hast called us, unworthy as we are, to live according to Thy spirit, grant us the grace to

perfect ourselves in the practice of the virtues Thou hast recommended to us; that we may have part in that happy eternity which Thou hast promised to those who persevere to the end.

CLOSE OF THE RETREAT.

After Mass and Thanksgiving, the Act of Consecration is read, with the Prayers following.

ACT OF CONSECRATION

TO THE SACRED HEART OF JESUS.

O Sacred Heart of Jesus, august throne of divine mercy, ineffable pledge of our confidence and love, behold us prostrate before Thee to render Thee thanks for the inestimable benefit of the Retreat ! From Thee descends every good gift, and from Thy infinite goodness we have received the precious talent of our holy Vocation. But we comprehend now, better than ever, that only by Thy aid shall we be able to appreciate its full value. We have experienced our weakness and misery, and we know that without Thee we can do nothing ; or rather, that of ourselves, we would only displease Thee, offend Thee, and abuse Thy graces. To Thee we now address our prayers and supplications ; in Thy bosom, as in a sacred sanctuary, we deposit the resolutions with which Thou hast inspired us. Oh ! render them fruitful by Thy benedictions, that they may be, hereafter, the invariable rule of our conduct in the accomplishment of our duties ! Thou hast purified our souls by the sanctifying waters of Thy

mercy. Preserve, in all its whiteness, the robe of innocence with which Thou hast clothed them ; permit us not to sully it again by the stains of sin. Reanimate within us our first fervor, the love of our Holy Rules, and the virtues of simplicity, humility, and charity. Make the sweet ties which unite us to Thee still more dear,—those ties which we formed at the foot of Thy Altar ; may poverty be for us the richest of all treasures ; may chastity be the delight of our souls ; and obedience be our life ! Be Thou blessed forever, for having called us to be Thy servants, in becoming those of the sick-poor. By this we become Thy true Daughters, since 'Thou art Charity itself. But, O sweet and amiable Saviour ! grant that our hearts may burn with the same flames which consume Thine ; that we may be filled with the same sentiments of compassion and mercy which attached Thee to the Cross, which made Thee give Thy life for the love of us ; that we also may know how to sacrifice all the faculties of our soul and body, our repose, our health, even our life, for our lords and dear masters, the poor !

From Thy divine Heart these sentiments should flow into ours ; draw us, then, to Thee, by the unction of Thy grace ; unite us to Thee by the attractions of Thy love ; grant that we may be one with Thee, as Thou art one with Thy heavenly Father ; that the spirit of prayer, the thought of Thy holy presence, and, above all, the Holy Communion, may

preserve this celestial union and nourish our fervor ; in a word, that we may no longer live, but that Thou mayest live in us ; that in all the circumstances of our life, Thou mayest be our support ; our succor in all our wants, our strength and our constancy in temptations ; our consolation in trials, our protection in dangers, the principle of our being, the object of our hopes, and the end of all our actions. Grant, O Lord, that we may be all Thine ; that we may love but Thee during time, and aspire after the happiness of possessing Thee in eternity. Amen.

TE DEUM.

Te Deum laudamus,* te Dominum confitemur.

Te æternum Patrem * omnis terra veneratur.

Tibi omnes Angeli,* tibi cœli et universæ Potestates :

Tibi Cherubim et Seraphim * incessabili voce proclamant :

Sanctus, Sanctus, Sanctus,* Dominus Deus Sabaoth :

Pleni sunt cœli et terra * majestatis gloriæ tuæ.

Te gloriosus * Apostolorum chorus.

Te Prophetarum * laudabilis numerus.

Te Martyrum candidatus * laudat exercitus.

Te per orbem terrarum * sancta confitetur Ecclesia.

Patrem * immensæ majestatis :

Venerandum tuum verum,* et unicum Filium.
Sanctum quoque* Paraclitum Spiritum.

Tu Rex gloriæ,* Christe.

Tu Patris* sempiternus es Filius.

Tu, ad liberandum suscepturus hominem,* non horruisti Virginis uterum.

Tu, devicto mortis aculeo,* aperuisti credentibus regna cœlorum.

Tu ad dexteram Dei sedes* in gloria Patris.

Judex crederis* esse venturus.

Te ergo quæsumus, famulis tuis subveni,* quos pretioso sanguine redemisti.

Æterna fac cum sanctis tuis* in gloria numerari.

Salvum fac populum tuum, Domine,* et benedic hæreditati tuæ.

Et rege eos, et extolle illos* usque in æternum.

Per singulos dies* benedicimus te;

Et laudamus nomen tuum in sæculum,* et in sæculum sæculi.

Dignare, Domine, die isto* sine peccato nos custodire.

Miserere nostri, Domine,* miserere nostri.

Fiat misericordia tua, Domine, super nos* quemadmodum speravimus in te.

In te, Domine, speravi,* non confundar in æternum.

Ÿ. Benedicamus Patrem et Filium cum Sancto Spiritu.

R. Laudemus et superexaltemus eum in sæcula.

OREMUS.

Deus, cujus misericordiæ non est numerus, et bonitatis infinitus est thesaurus; piissimæ majestati tuæ pro collatis donis gratias agimus, tuam semper clementiam exorantes, ut qui petentibus postulata concedis, eosdem non deserens, ad præmia futura disponas; Per Christum Dominum nostrum. Amen.

CANTICLE OF THE BLESSED VIRGIN.

Magnificat * anima mea Dominum.

Et exultavit spiritus meus * in Deo salutari meo :
Quia respexit humilitatem ancillæ suæ; * ecce
enim ex hoc beatam me dicent omnes generationes.

Quia fecit mihi magna qui potens est, * et sanctum
nomen ejus.

Et misericordia ejus a progenie in progenies *
timentibus eum.

Fecit potentiam in brachio suo : * dispersit superbos
mente cordis sui.

Deposuit potentes de sede, * et exaltavit humiles.
Esurientes implevit bonis, * et divites dimisit
inanes.

Suscepit Israel puerum suum, * recordatus misericordiæ
suæ.

Sicut locutus est ad patres nostros, * Abraham et
semini ejus in secula.

Gloria Patri, etc.

Sicut erat, &c.

℣. Ora pro nobis, sancta Dei Genitrix ;

℞. Ut digni efficiamur promissionibus Christi.

OREMUS.

Sub tuum præsidium confugimus, sancta Dei genitrix. Nostras deprecationes ne despicias in necessitatibus nostris ; sed a periculis cunctis libera nos semper, Virgo gloriosa et benedicta.

Concede nos famulos tuos, quæsumus, Domine Deus, perpetuâ mentis et corporis sanitate gaudere ; et gloriosâ beatæ Mariæ semper Virginis intercessione, a præsentis liberari tristitia et æterna perfrui lætitia : Per Christum Dominum nostrum.

Three times : O Mary, conceived without sin, pray for us who have recourse to thee !

SPIRITUAL READINGS

FOR THE ANNUAL RETREAT.

FIRST DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book I. chapter xx.

SECOND READING.

Benefits of Creation and Preservation.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

Creation is the first of the gifts of God. This truth being so well established, I shall only say, that such a favor of itself, obliges man to devote himself entirely to the service of his Creator, since he is unquestionably indebted to Him for all he has received from Him in his creation. It is certain, that by this first gift, man received his being; that is, his body, with all its senses, his soul with all its faculties; whence it follows, that he is obliged to employ these faculties in the service of his Creator, under the

penalty of the blackest ingratitude. If a man builds a house, who should have the use of it, but the builder? If a man plants a vine, who should gather the fruits thereof, but the planter? And if a father has any children, whom are they obliged to serve, but the father who begot them? If it is so great an evil for a son to disobey his father, how grievous a crime is it, to rebel against God who is our Father by so many just claims, that no other father in comparison with Him, deserves to be so called. Therefore, with much reason does God complain of this ingratitude by one of His Prophets, in these words (*Malac. vi.*): "If I am your Father, where is my honor; and if I am your Master, where is my fear?" "Perverse and adulterous nation! He exclaims by another Prophet; foolish and ignorant people! is it thus you requite your Father from whom you have received so many favors? Have I not formed and created you?"

These words are addressed to those ungrateful creatures who never raise their eyes to contemplate heaven, nor turn them upon themselves to consider their origin. St. Augustine's sentiments were far different; since, by the knowledge of himself, he arrived at the knowledge of his Creator. He speaks thus in one of his soliloquies (*L. xxxl.*): "I returned to myself, I entered into my inmost being, saying: Who art thou? And I answered myself: I am a rational and mortal man. Thou hast made me, O my God, and not I, myself; by Thee I live, and by

Thee all things live and subsist. I thank Thee, O my Creator, because Thou hast made and fashioned me. I thank Thee, O my eternal Light, for having brought me to the knowledge of Thy greatness, and to that of my nothingness."

Creation is the first benefit of God and the foundation of all the rest; for all other benefits presuppose a being, and this is given us at our creation. By this, it is easy to judge of the magnitude of this benefit, as well as of the gratitude it merits. For, as God is most liberal in bestowing His graces, He is no less exact in requiring an acknowledgment of the same; not for any advantage accruing to Himself thereby, but for that which redounds to us in the accomplishment of our duty.

Thus we read in the Old Testament (*Exod.* XII.), that no sooner had God conferred any favor upon His people than He commanded them to preserve the remembrance thereof. When He withdrew these people, whom He tenderly loved, from the bondage of Egypt, He immediately ordered them to keep a solemn feast every year in memory of that happy day (*Exod.* XIII.). Having destroyed all the first-born of the Egyptians, He ordered, at the same time (*Exod.* XVI.), that all the first-born of His people should be offered unto Him. Shortly after their departure from Egypt, when He first rained down manna from heaven,—a food with which He sustained them for forty years in the desert,—He immediately ordered a certain quantity

of it to be put into a vessel and kept in the sanctuary, as a memorial of so extraordinary a mercy. Now, if God was so exact in requiring His people to be ever mindful of these temporal favors, what does He not expect of us for this eternal benefit,—for the soul He has given us is immortal.

Hence arose the custom among the ancient Patriarchs (*Gen.* XII., XIII., and XXII.), of erecting altars whenever God favored them in any particular manner; nay, the very names they gave their children were expressive of the benefits they had received, so that they might always be mindful of them; hence, St. Augustine took occasion to say, that man ought to think of God as often as he breathes. In fact, if man lives, it is because of the gift of creation; consequently, he should render continual thanks to God for this immortal being which he received from the divine bounty.

If we are obliged in justice to serve our Creator, it is no less binding upon us to do so, in order to attain the happiness and entire perfection of our being. For the better understanding of this, we must know that, generally speaking, creatures have not, in their beginning, all the perfection suitable to them; they have many qualifications, it is true, but many are still wanting, and these they must receive from Him who commenced the work. So that the same cause which gave existence to the being, can alone conduct it to the end, and thus complete its perfection. For this reason, all effects have an

inclination towards the causes that produced them. Plants seek the sun, and run as deep as they can into the earth which shot them forth. Fishes remain in the waters that engendered them ; the chicken is no sooner out of the shell, than it seeks the mother's wings, following her for protection. A lamb, in like manner, follows the ewe that brought it forth, and can distinguish it from a thousand others of the same color ; it never loses sight of her, seeming to say : Here I received whatever I have, and here I shall receive all that is yet wanting to me.

This is what usually happens in the works of nature ; and if those of art had any sense and motion they would do the same. Should a painter draw a picture and leave out the eyes, what would this picture do, were it sensible of this defect ? Whither would it go ? Not, indeed, to the palaces of kings and princes, who, as such, could never supply the deficiency ; but to the master's house who drew the first strokes, that he might finish his work. Learn from this your lesson, O rational creature.

You are not yet finished ; do not pride yourself on the advantages you already possess. True, you have received something, but a great deal is yet wanting to your perfection ; you are scarce but a rough draught ; all the lustre and beauty of the work are yet wanting. You will be more fully convinced of this, if you observe the propensity of nature itself, which, acknowledging, as it were, its imperfections, is continually craving for what is still

due to it. The Lord who formed you, thought fit to starve you out, that your necessities might compel you to apply to Him, and thus gain you to Himself, making you confess Him to be your Master. This is why God left you incomplete. Not giving you at your creation all you required, was not an effect of parsimony, but of love; it was not to leave you destitute, but to make you humble; it was not to forsake you in your necessities, but to oblige you to have recourse to Him. Now, since you are really poor and blind, why do you not go to the Father who created you, to the painter who commenced to sketch you, that he may give you what is still wanting? David, doubtless, was in possession of this secret when he said: "Thy hands, O Lord, have made me and formed me: give me understanding and I will learn thy commandments" (*Ps. CXVIII*). As if he had said: All that is in me is the work of Thy hands, O Lord! but Thy work is not yet completed. I am not quite finished, O Lord! because the eyes of my soul are not yet opened. I have not light enough to discover what is proper for me. To whom shall I have recourse to obtain what I need, if not to Him who has given me what I already possess? Therefore, enlighten the eyes of this blind creature, that I may know Thee; and thus shalt Thou complete in me what Thou hast begun.

Since God must give perfection to our understanding, He must also give it to the will, and to all the powers of the soul, that He who began the work

may give it the finishing touch. For, it is this same Lord who liberally provides, without impoverishing Himself, who gives increase without display, who enriches without ostentation, and who fully satisfies without the necessity of large possessions. For this reason the Wise Man says: "One is rich having nothing, and another is poor having great riches." (*Prov. XIII.*) This teaches us that the poor man who, like St. Francis, has God with him, is truly rich; and that, without God, he is wretchedly poor, even should he possess all the riches of earth.

Man is under obligations to God not only for having created him, but also for preserving him; for He who made thee, O man, still continues to preserve thee; so that it would be as impossible for thee to subsist without God, as it was to have given thyself existence. This second obligation is not less than the first; if you consider well, you will find it even greater; for the former was laid upon you but once, whereas this is conferred upon you at every moment: for, continually preserving you after your creation, is similar to creating you anew. The one requires no less love, no less power than the other. Therefore, if your obligation to God for having created you, in an instant, is so great, what do you not owe Him for preserving you so many moments, so many hours, nay, so many years? You cannot take a step unless God gives you power to move. You cannot open or close your eyes without His

assistance. If you do not believe that God gives motion to your members, you are no Christian; but if, believing that you receive from Him this favor, and yet, are so rash as to offend Him, I know not what name to give you!

If to all these benefits we add the whole world which, as a rich and plentiful table, God has prepared and spread for your special use, how infinitely will your obligation be increased! Everything under heaven is absolutely for man, or for his service. And should any one object that flies are of no use to man, it may be answered, that, at least, they serve as food for birds which are created for man. Although man does not eat the grass of the fields, it nourishes the cattle necessary for his subsistence (*Ps. VIII.*) Cast your eyes over the world, and you will see what rich lands, what large possessions you have; how great is your inheritance! All that moves on the earth, all that swims in the waters, all that shines in the heavens, is for you. All these things are the effects of God's liberality,—the works of His Providence, traces of His beauty, testimonies of His mercy, sparks of His charity, heralds of His greatness! Consider these as so many preachers sent to you from God to furnish you with the means of knowing Him. Everything on earth or in heaven, says St. Augustine, perpetually exhorts me to love Thee, O Lord. All speak the same language, so that no one can be lawfully excused from complying with a just duty.

Oh ! if you had ears to hear the voices of all creatures, you would readily understand how unanimously they invite you to love God ! The sky says to you : I furnish you with light during the day, and at night my stars shine upon you that you may not walk in darkness. By my various influences, I produce what is necessary for your life. The air, on the other hand, says to you : It is I that give you breath, I refresh you, and temper the heat of your vital spirits that you may not be consumed thereby. The water says : It is for you that I pour out seasonable rains ; for you, my streams and fountains are ever flowing ; for your nourishment, I engender an infinite variety of fish. I water your lands and your gardens that they may bring forth fruits. I make a short passage through the seas, to furnish you with the occasion of adding the riches of other countries to those of your own.

What will the earth tell you,—this common mother of all things, this universal workshop of nature ? She may, with great reason, speak to you as the rest have done, and tell you that she, like a mother, carries you in her arms ; supplies you with the necessaries of life ; maintains you with the variety of her products ; that, to serve you, she holds correspondence with all the other elements, and with the heavens themselves, for the procuring of their influence ; that, in fine, she neither forsakes you in life nor in death ; for, during life she nourishes and supports you, and at death, takes

you into her bosom and there gives you a *resting-place*. To *conclude*, all the world cries aloud to you: Behold, O mortal man, and consider what love your Creator has had for you; since for your sake He made me, commanding me, for love of Him, to serve you; that so you may love and serve Him who created me for you, and you, for Himself.

This, O Christian, is the voice of all creatures; after this, can you deny that you are strangely dull if you hear not these voices, and extremely ungrateful if you are insensible to so much goodness! If you receive a favor, return due thanks for the same, otherwise you will be punished for your ingratitude. For, says a holy Doctor, there is no creature in the world but speaks these three words to man: *Receive, return, beware*; that is: Receive the benefit, return what you owe, and beware of the punishment that falls upon the ungrateful.

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapter I.

FOURTH READING.

Benefits of Redemption and Justification.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

Man, after his creation, was placed in the terrestrial paradise, and raised to a high degree of honor

and glory ; but, so far from acknowledging these benefits by fidelity in serving his Creator, he rebelled against Him. By this ingratitude, he merited to be driven out of paradise which had been allotted to him for his abode. Consequently, he found himself in the world as in a place of exile ; he was, moreover, condemned to the punishment of hell ; that, as pride had rendered him an associate in the sin of the demons, he might also share their sufferings and torments. The Prophet said to Giezi, his servant, after he received presents from Naaman, the leper (*Kings* IV., 4) : “ Thou hast received the money of Naaman ; may his leprosy cleave to thee and to thy descendants forever.” God pronounced against man a similar sentence : Thou hast coveted the riches of Lucifer, participated in his pride and rebellion ; therefore, let the leprosy of Lucifer, that is, the chastisement which he deserved, cleave to thee at the same hour. Thus, man becomes like to the demons ;—having imitated their sin, he shares their torments.

But God, whose mercy is as great as His Majesty, considered not so much the insult offered to His sovereign goodness, as our misfortune. Having more compassion for our unhappy condition, than resentment on account of our offenses, He resolved to succor man by the medium of His only Son, our Redeemer. But how was our reconciliation effected ? Who is competent to explain such a favor ? It establishes so close a friendship between God and

man, that God not only pardons man, receiving him again into favor, making him one with Himself, by love; but, what is far beyond all expression, it unites man to Himself in such a manner, that, among all created things, there is nothing so closely united as the divine and the human nature in Jesus Christ; for they are not only one in love and in grace, but also one in Person.

Thus, was our reconciliation effected. This is the remedy we have received at the hands of our Mediator. And although we are infinitely more indebted to God for so sovereign a remedy, than we are able to express; yet, we are under no less obligation to Him for the manner in which He applies this remedy, than for the remedy itself. I am infinitely indebted to Thee, O my God, for having delivered me from hell, and for having reconciled me to Thee; but, I owe Thee much more for the manner in which Thou hast freed and reconciled me. All Thy works, O Lord, are admirable in all their parts; and although it seems to man that he loses himself in the contemplation of any one of Thy marvels, the same vanishes, when he raises his eyes to heaven to consider another; nor is this any discredit to Thy greatness, O Lord, that one prodigy eclipses another, but rather, it is an argument of Thy glory.

What course, O my God, hast Thou taken to heal me? Thou mightest have procured my salvation by an infinite number of ways, without trouble or

expense to Thee ; but Thy bounty was so great and surprising, that, to give me a more manifest proof of Thy goodness and love, Thou didst choose to relieve my miseries by Thy own sufferings, which were so vehement that the very thought of them, drew upon Thee a bloody sweat, and Thy undergoing of them, rent the very rocks with grief.

If it is true, O Lord, that I am thus indebted to Thee for having redeemed me, what do I not owe Thee for having redeemed me in such a manner? For, to redeem me, Thou hast suffered incredible torments and disgrace ; Thou hast made Thyself the scorn of men and the contempt of the world, for love of me. To procure me honor, Thou hast dishonored Thyself ; and that I might be acquitted, Thou hast suffered Thyself to be accused. Thou hast shed Thy Blood to wash away the stains of my guilt ; Thou hast died to raise me to life ; and by Thy tears Thou hast delivered me from everlasting weeping and gnashing of teeth. How truly art Thou a kind Father, since Thou hast so loved Thy children ! How truly art Thou a good Shepherd, since Thou hast given Thyself for the nourishment of Thy flock ! How faithful a Guardian art Thou, since Thou hast so generously laid down Thy life for those whom Thou hast taken under Thy care ! What return shall I make Thee for such a gift ? With what tears shall I make compensation for Thy tears ? With what life shall I repay this life ? What proportion is there between the life of a man and that

of a God ? between the tears of a creature and those of the Creator ?

I appeal now to all creatures, whether man can conceive a greater benefit, a more generous favor, or an obligation more binding than this is. Tell me, ye choirs of Angels, whether God has ever done so much for you ? After this, can any man refuse to give himself entirely to the service of this good Master. I am indebted to Thee, O Lord, says St. Anselm, for all that I am, upon three several accounts : Because Thou hast created me, I owe Thee all that is in me ; I owe Thee the same debt, and with more justice for having redeemed me ; and because, after bestowing so many favors Thou hast promised to reward me, so should I be wholly Thine. Why, then, do I not give myself at once to Him to whom I am so justly due ? Oh ! insupportable ingratitude ! Oh ! invincible hardness of the human heart, not to be softened by so many favors ! Nothing in the world is so hard, that it may not be made softer. Fire melts metal ; iron grows flexible in the forge ; the blood of certain animals will soften even the diamond ; but, O unhappy heart, what iron, what diamond, is so hard as thou art, if neither the flames of hell, nor the care of so charitable a Father, nor the Blood of the spotless Lamb, which has been shed for thee, can make thee soft and flexible ?

And I, says our Saviour, when I shall be lifted up from the earth, will draw all things to myself.

With what force, O Lord, with what chains? With the force of my love, with the chains of my mercies. I will draw them, says the Lord, with the cords of Adam, with the bands of love. Who is there that will not be drawn by these cords? Who will refuse to be bound by these chains? who will not be won by these mercies?

Now, if it is so heinous a crime not to love this great God, what must it be, to offend Him, to despise His commandments? How dare you employ your hands in injuring those hands that have been so liberal to you, as to be nailed to the Cross for your sake? When the holy Patriarch, Joseph, was solicited by his lewd mistress, to betray his master, the chaste and grateful young man made this reply: Behold, my master hath delivered all his goods to me, except thee, who art his wife: How, then, can I do this wicked thing, and sin against my God? (*Gen. xxxix.*) We are to observe in these words, that Joseph does not say: I ought not; or, it is not just that I should offend him; but he speaks in stronger terms: How *can* I do this wicked thing?—to signify that extraordinary favors ought to deprive us, not only of the will, but, in some measure, of the very power of offending our benefactor.

But, what would the benefit of our Redemption avail us, were it not followed by that of Justification, by which this extraordinary favor is applied to us? For, as medicine, how excellent soever it be, is

wholly useless, if not applied to the distemper ; so, this heavenly medicine of the Blood of the Son of God, will effect no cure in us, if it be not applied to us, and if we be not disposed to take it. Now, this application is peculiarly the work of the Holy Ghost, to whom the sanctification of man is attributed. He it is who comes to the aid of the sinner with His mercy ; who having thus prepared him, calls him ; who justifies him when called ; who conducts him when justified, in the paths of justice ; and thus raises him to perfection by the gift of perseverance, to crown him, in the end, with everlasting glory. These are the different degrees of grace comprised in the inestimable favor of Justification.

The first of all these graces is that of vocation. This is conferred when man, by the strength of this divine Spirit, having broken all the bonds and fetters of his sins, is freed from the tyranny and slavery of the devil, and raised from death to life ; when of a sinner, he becomes just ; when from a child of wrath, he is made a child of God ; this is not accomplished without the special help of divine grace. Our Saviour tells us this by these words : " No man can come to me, except the Father draw him (*John VI.*), to signify that neither the free-will of man, nor all the advantages of human nature, are sufficient, of themselves, to lift a man out of the depths of sin, to a life of grace, unless the Almighty hand of God raises him up. But, who can explain the countless favors comprised in this ? For, it is

certain, that sin, by this means, is extracted from the soul, and sin is the cause of all its miseries ; hence, we may judge how great a good this must be, which expels so many evils. Now as the consideration of this benefit is a powerful motive to make us grateful, and a most efficacious one to excite us to the pursuit of virtue, I will explain in a few words the vast riches which this benefit brings with it.

First, then, by the grace of Justification, sinful man is reconciled to God, and restored to His favor. The beloved disciple, St. John, so much extols this when he says: "Behold, what manner of charity the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called, and should be the sons of God." (*St. John* I.) He does not think it enough to say that we are called the children of God, but he adds, that we are really such ; so that human distrust, which carries so much weakness and imperfection with it, should have a clearer and more distinct view of the liberality of God's grace, and perceive that He has truly and really ennobled man, by making him His son, and not giving him merely the title.

Secondly, by Justification, man is delivered from eternal reprobation to which sin had condemned him. For, sin rendering man odious to God, it is impossible to be an object of God's hatred, without being, at the same time, in the greatest misery. Hence, it follows, that the wicked having despised God and separated themselves from Him, they most justly deserve to be rejected, to be despised by Him.

Justification produces another result more spiritual than the preceding; this is, the renovation and reformation of the inward man. God, who is an infinite abyss of mercy, is not content to pardon our sins and restore us to His friendship; He wishes to banish from our souls all the disorders which follow in the train of sin, by renewing within us the inward man: He heals our wounds, cleanses our defilements, breaks our chains, relieves us of the burden of evil desires, frees us from the slavery and captivity of the devil; He moderates the violence of our passions, restores us to true liberty, giving to our soul its first beauty; He brings back joy and peace into our conscience and enlivens our interior sentiments; gives us an impulse for good and an aversion for evil; He strengthens us against temptations, and, after all these advantages, enriches us with the treasure of good works. In fine, He repairs the inward man and all his faculties after such a manner, that the Apostle does not hesitate to call those who are thus justified, new men and new creatures.

To all these benefits, God, in His goodness, has added another, namely: the presence of the Holy Ghost and of the Blessed Trinity in the soul of him who is justified, to abide there and to instruct him in the use he is to make of his riches: like to a good father, who is not satisfied to leave his estate to his children, but provides a guardian to manage it for them. The soul of the sinner is a den of vipers,

dragons, and serpents; that is, a place where all sorts of wicked spirits dwell, as our Saviour says in the Gospel (*St. Matth. XII., St. Luke XXI.*); on the contrary, the soul of a man justified, becomes the habitation of the three Persons of the Blessed Trinity, as our Lord expressly signifies by these words: "If any one love me, he will keep my word; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and will make our abode with him." (*St. John XIV.*).

To these favors may be added one more, which is: that all who are justified, become living members of the mystical body of Jesus Christ; whereas before, they were dead members incapable of receiving the influence of His grace. From this benefit, spring many new and singular prerogatives: The Son of God loves and cherishes them as His own members; and, as their Head, He is continually imparting His force and vigor to them; the Eternal Father looks upon them with eyes of affection, considering them as living members of His only Son, united and incorporated with Him by the participation of His spirit; therefore, their actions are meritorious, being the actions of living members of Jesus Christ.

Hence, when these justified souls ask any favor of God, they do so with perfect confidence; knowing that it is not so much for themselves that they ask it, as for the Son of God who is honored and glorified with them; for, it is incontestable, that the good

which is done to the members, is also extended to the Head.

But, let us conclude by the most important of all privileges, the end to which all others are directed, namely: the right which all justified sinners have, to eternal life. As God, who is no less merciful than just, condemns impenitent sinners to everlasting torments; on the other hand, He rewards all true penitents with eternal happiness. And though He could forgive men their sins, and restore them to His friendship, without raising them to a participation of His glory, yet He would not do so; but, by an excess of mercy, He justifies those whom He pardons; adopts as His children those whom He justifies, making them His heirs, giving them a share in His riches with His only Son.

Hence proceeds that lively hope which comforts the just in all their tribulations; because they are assured of this inestimable happiness. For, though they are encompassed with the infirmities and miseries of this life, they know that all the evils they can suffer here below bear no comparison with the glory prepared for them hereafter; on the contrary (*II. Cor. iv.*), present afflictions, although light, will work for them an eternal weight of glory.

These are the advantages comprehended under the inestimable benefit of Justification, which St. Augustine, with a great deal of reason, prefers to the creation of the whole world; for God created

the universe with a word ; but the Justification of sinful man was at the expense of His Blood, and of the most grievous torments. Now, if we are so much indebted to the goodness of Almighty God for our creation, how much more do we owe Him for having justified us at so great a cost !

SECOND DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book I. chapter xxii.

SECOND READING.

On the Knowledge of One's Self.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

We have now to consider our miseries which are very great and numerous: miseries of the soul and those of the body.

As regards the miseries of the soul, there are three kinds: the evils common to human nature, extending, generally, to all mankind; the sins committed before conversion, and those committed after giving one's self to God.

I. As to the first, no one can express the poverty, destitution, and disorder, to which human nature was reduced by sin, nor how incapable it is of any good, unless aided by a special grace of the Holy Ghost. Of these numerous miseries, there are four which you should attentively consider, as they are the sources of all others.

1. The first is, to have been conceived in sin; and this misfortune David alleges as an excuse, when he says: "O Lord, I was conceived in iniquity,

and in sins did my mother conceive me." He calls *iniquity* and *sins* the original sin, because, as says a holy Doctor, although a single act, it included all sins; for all sins spring from this root, as from a mortal venom. This makes the road of virtue so difficult, as holy Job signifies in these words: "Who can make him clean, that is conceived of unclean seed, if not Thou alone, O my God?" For, as woollen cloth dyed in the fleece, retains the dye; so, the inclination to sin remains, having its source in man himself, in the flesh and blood of which he is formed, unless he is in a most special manner assisted by God. And, as it is almost impossible to extract those humors which a man has imbibed with his mother's milk, what shall we say of those contracted in his very formation?

2. From this springs another deplorable misery, which is, that all the powers of man have been weakened and corrupted. For, as the virtue of leaven is diffused throughout the paste, communicating its acidity thereto, if left for a long time; and, as a poisoned beverage penetrates all the members of the body in an instant, inflating and filling them with its malignity; so, the poisonous leaven of original sin is spread through all the faculties of the soul, imprinting on them disease and contagion. Hence, it is, that the understanding, which is the chief of these faculties, is obscured in regard to the things of God; the will is enfeebled for effecting good; the inclination to evil is strong, the memory

wandering, the imagination restless : and this miserable flesh with which we are clothed, is tainted, infected, and prone to evil. Consider, particularly, the trouble and inquietude of your imagination, and how opposed it is to reason, since you can scarce accomplish the shortest prayer, before it steals you away from yourself, wanders to every corner of the earth, like a leaf at the sport of the winds.

As regards the exterior senses, you have only to consider with attention, to how many dangers your soul is exposed by the sight alone ; and you will easily comprehend the truth of these words of Ecclesiasticus : "What is there more dangerous in the world than the eyes of man?" There is scarcely an evil on earth of which the eye has not been the source. And if you would know the true cause of this, it is because we have lost original justice and grace. For, as salt preserves meat from becoming corrupted, and without this preservative it soon becomes converted into worms and decay ; in like manner, is human nature preserved in purity by justice and grace ; but having lost this by sin, the powers of man are inclined to evil with wonderful facility, and are applied to virtue with incredible reluctance, unless divine grace repairs and fortifies them.

3. From this same root, springs the tyrannical empire of self-love, which may be called the eldest-born of original sin ; for the one turns from God and does not wish to see Him ; and the other turns to

self by a disorderly affection, loving self above all things, even more than God Himself. St. Thomas says, that this false love enters into all the sins committed in the world, that it is the unhappy cause of them ; and this is true, since no one sins but to enjoy something for which he has a disorderly affection, and which he prefers to God and to the observance of His commandments. All other disorders in the world, are bad fruits springing from this evil tree. From this evil arises that eagerness which impels man to seek his own interest, and strangely to neglect the claims of God. From this also springs their sensitiveness in what touches their honor, while they are most indifferent in what regards the honor of God ; they are zealous in the pursuit of their own affairs, but slothful in what concerns the service of God : no labor seems difficult to them when their advantage is in question, but for God, they would not take a step ; they would leave nothing undone for the health of their body, but take not the least pains about the salvation of their soul : the slightest loss in temporal matters troubles them, but they heed not the loss of the eternal goods of the soul.

Were you to reflect upon your own misery, you would be convinced, from sad experience, of this truth. See how much time and effort it requires to enkindle within your heart a little devotion and fervor of spirit ; and how easily it is again cooled, since it vanishes in an instant.

By this you will perceive, that nature of itself, has an astonishing tendency to evil, and a strange opposition to good. It is like dry tinder with regard to vice, and as green and wet wood with regard to virtue: on one side, a single spark is sufficient to produce a great conflagration in an instant; and, on the other, a long time and much care are necessary to heat it.

4. From this disorder and corruption springs another misery: men degrade themselves from the rank to which their birth entitles them; they retain nothing of the nobility of their origin, they debase and put themselves on a level with beasts. The Prophet deplores this misery, saying: "Man was put in a sublime state by his creation, and he knew it not; he has placed himself on a level with beasts, that have no reason, and has become like to them." For, setting aside many other points of resemblance, we see clearly that, as beasts love, seek, and desire only sensible goods, because their nature is not capable of conceiving anything more elevated; so, the greater part of men become, through their own fault, what beasts are by nature: their thoughts, conversations, solitudes, desires, and affections, tend only to things of earth, losing sight that they are men gifted with reason; that a holy law is laid upon them; that eternal hopes and another life are held out to them.

Behold, then, what man has become by sin. After having been raised by his creation to so

elevated and dignified a state, he has become like to beasts; he has been despoiled of all the gifts of grace, wounded in those of nature, driven from Paradise and banished to this world; made an enemy of God, a child of wrath, justly excluded from all the gifts of glory; and, at the moment of his birth, he enters into the world with all these miseries, which are the inheritance of the children of Adam. If, after all this, you wish a more striking picture, cast your eyes upon Job, after being abandoned, by divine permission, to the persecutions of the devil: he sees his flocks carried away, his houses destroyed, his children killed, and he himself covered with sores from head to foot; having no dwelling-place but a dung-hill upon which he is seated, and removing the corruption that issues from his sores, with a potsherd. After sin, the devil reduced our soul to the condition to which he subjected the body of this holy man, after receiving power to afflict it. Then, man forfeited all the gifts of grace; all those of nature became feeble and languid; from a paradise of delights, he was cast into this miserable world, as upon a dung-hill, with nothing to remove the filth of his spiritual wounds, that is to say, his vicious inclinations and passions, but a piece of broken clay, as I may term his free-will; for, although after the fall, man preserved his liberty, so that it was in his power not to consent to sin, yet, he cannot prevent himself from being strongly inclined to evil.

II. After considering the miseries common to all men, reflect on those which regard you individually. See what your past life has been, and how you live at present : by this you will ascertain how much you have contributed to your own misery ; and that you have augmented by your actual sins and by the habit of sin, your original corruption. For, there is nothing more contrary to a rational creature than to live in opposition to the rules of reason ; and, as it is the property of contraries to destroy one another, nothing causes such havoc among men, as the habit of living in sin. Examine the course of your life, the time when you were farthest from God ; and you will find during that period, more or less prolonged, that you lived as a child of the world, as a slave of sin and of the demon, as a Pagan who has no knowledge of God or of His law. For, though you had faith, you acted as if you had not received this divine light.

III. This consideration of your past disorders, should be followed by serious meditation on the sins of which you daily render yourself guilty ; count them one by one ; and as a sick man does not fail to point out all the infirmities of the body to his physician, in like manner, do you expose frankly, all your miseries to God, that He may cure them. See if you are subject to anger ; if you are too fond of your ease, if you are vain or curious ; if you are inconstant in your good purposes ; if you speak too freely, if you are envious or proud ; if you harbor malice in your heart or practise dissimulation ; if

you too eagerly follow your inclinations; if there lurk in you any root of pride, ambition, attachment to your own will, sloth in the pursuit of good; if you are severe or exacting in regard to your neighbor; in fine, if you are filled with self-love and prompt to follow the impulse of passion. This Knowledge of Self is the key of true humility and the secret of your advancement; without this Knowledge you will never be humble; you will not understand what you owe to God, nor will you labor efficaciously for the cure of your spiritual maladies.

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapter II.

FOURTH READING.

*On the Abuse of Grace, and the Means of
Avoiding so great an Evil.*

(From the Writings of Father Courbon).

A powerful means to enable you to be faithful to grace, is, to have a continual fear of abusing it. In order to excite this salutary fear in your soul, endeavor to be convinced of these three truths: First, that the greatest misfortune which can befall us is, to abuse the grace of God. Second, that this

misfortune befalls the greater part of mankind. Third, that there is nothing less feared than the abuse of grace.

What a misfortune to abuse so essential a good, without which we can do nothing in the order of salvation ;—an excellent good, by which we can accomplish all things ;—a good most precious and far transcending all the riches of this world ; for, a single degree of grace is infinitely more estimable than all the gifts of nature.

To abuse the grace of God, is to abuse the Blood of Jesus Christ, since it is the price thereof. This is the expression the great Apostle uses, to prevent us from neglecting anything by which we may acquire this precious treasure of the grace of Jesus Christ, and preserve it when we have the happiness of possessing it : “ Do you not know, says he, that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who resides in you, and who has been given you by God, and that you do not belong to yourself, for you have been redeemed at a great price.”

To lose the grace of God, is to lose your soul, to lose Paradise ; it is losing God Himself ; it is to force this Father, so good, mild, and merciful, to become a severe and inflexible Judge, who will be eternally avenged, if we become His enemies by abusing His grace ; for, as graces well-improved are a treasure of merit for man ; those which are neglected and despised, are a treasure of the wrath of God. Jesus Christ says that He will demand

more of him who shall have received more ; and that a more rigorous account will be required of him to whom the more precious talents will have been intrusted : words that have caused the greatest Saints to tremble.

The more graces Thou bestowest upon us, O my God, the greater maledictions we shall incur, if we are so unfortunate as to abuse them. Wo to thee, Corozain, wo to thee, Bethsaida, for if the wonders that have been done in thee, had been wrought in Tyre and Sidon, these cities would have done penance in sackcloth and ashes. And thou, Capharnaum, dost thou elevate thyself to heaven? thou shalt descend even to hell ; for if the miracles that have been done in thy midst, had been wrought in Sodom, she would, perhaps, have subsisted to this day ; therefore, I declare to thee, that Sodom shall be less punished than thou in the day of judgment." All these words of Jesus Christ should convince us of this first truth : the greatest misfortune that can happen to us, is, to abuse the grace of God ; and that the more He grants, the more fearful should we be of abusing them.

The greater part of mankind abuse the graces of God : this is the second truth which should be well impressed upon our mind, that we may avoid such a misfortune. Attend seriously to the words of the Prophet Isaias, by which God reproaches men for the continual abuse of His graces. " I have called," says God, " and no one has replied ; I have spoken,

and they have not heard ; but they have done evil before my eyes ; they have desired what I willed not. I have extended my hands during the day to an incredulous people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own thoughts. What more could I do to my vineyard that I have not done to it ? I expected it to bring forth grapes and it hath brought forth wild grapes. And now I will show you, what I will do to my vineyard ! I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be wasted : I will break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down : I will make it desolate ; it shall not be pruned, and it shall not be digged ; but briars and thorns shall come up : and I will command the clouds to rain no rain upon it."

How many holy inspirations neglected ! How many emotions contemned and rejected ! These are precious graces that would have been followed by others still greater. This is a divine seed which will produce fruit for heaven if we cultivate it. All this becomes useless by the abuse of the greater part of mankind.

The third truth is not less evident than the two preceding ones, namely : *that there is nothing less feared by the greater number of men, than the abuse of grace.* Men are in continual apprehension of losing their temporal goods ; every one fears to be despised, to be poor, infirm, unprotected ; to lose a cause, to be unsuccessful in an important affair ; every precaution is taken on such occasions, and

the best means adopted to ensure success. What is not done for the preservation of health, for the prolongation of life ! so appalling is the thought of death ! But, O my God, what strange blindness in man ! Where is he to be found who thus fears to abuse Thy graces ?

To avoid falling into the misfortune of those who despise the grace of God, try to impress upon your mind the truths which are about to be explained.

1. It is certain, that the number of graces still in reserve for me, is not infinite ; in the designs of God, that measure is limited. There will be a last day for me ; a last hour, a last confession, a last Communion, a last inspiration ; and I shall ever be uncertain as to the time of these graces. How great, then, is my temerity when I reckon upon future graces, despising the present !

2. Of all the chastisements inflicted by God on the sinner during life, there is none to be more dreaded than the subtraction of His graces.

If, notwithstanding all God's efforts to keep me in His friendship, I voluntarily withdraw from Him ; if, notwithstanding so much care and so many advances on His part, to shield me, to recall me from my wanderings, I still persist in my obstinacy, close my ear to all the warnings He gives me ; allowing Him to act, to speak for entire years, without giving Him any reply ; should I complain if He withdraw His graces and despise me, after

having so long despised Him ; if He harden His heart against me, after I have been so long hardened against Him ! Why should God give me His powerful assistance, if I remain inactive, lead an idle, slothful life, destitute of good works ?

The Holy Scripture teaches me, that the sterile fig-tree was struck with anathema, because it bore no fruit ; that the barren soil was cursed, because it did not bring forth grain, or because the grain was indifferent ; that the slothful servant was condemned, and deprived of the talent he had received, because he did not put it to profit.

3. It is certain, that this terrible chastisement of the withdrawal of graces is more common than is imagined ; and that daily, an infinity of Christians are guilty of the same fault as the guests mentioned in the Gospel : they excused themselves ; but the Master sent His servants to gather all they could find, all the poor and the infirm, that they might eat at His table. He was told that the order had been executed, but there still was room. He then sent His servants into the highways, to search the streets and in some degree, to compel the passers-by to enter, that His house might be filled.

Grace operates wonders among foreign nations : Jesus Crucified is there adored, after He is known ; the Gospel is there practised ; whereas among us, a life altogether Pagan is led ; faith is weak ; the word of God is everywhere preached, but the greater number of men do not listen to it, or, at least, they

derive no profit from it ; it will be preached to nations that will heed, and profit by it.

Let us then continually fear to abuse the grace of God, and often say with David : Lord, cast me not away from Thy face, and take not Thy Holy Spirit from me. Restore unto me the joy of Thy salvation, and strengthen me with a perfect spirit. O my God, let the treasure of Thy graces flow upon me, close not the bowels of Thy mercy against me ; restore to me this rich talent ; if I ask for it again, it is not to waste and lose it, but to re-enter the path that leads to Thee, and walk therein with fidelity and perseverance.

In fine, often recall the words of Almighty God in the Apocalypse : “ Behold I come quickly : hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown.”

The first means to be employed, to prevent us from abusing the graces of God, is to be profoundly humble.

The prayer of him who humbles himself, shall pierce the clouds, says Ecclesiasticus. And the Lord adds by His Prophet, Isaias : “ Upon whom shall I cast my eyes, but upon the poor man, whose heart is broken and humbled, and who listens to my words with trembling ? ”

God resists the proud, and gives His grace to the humble, says the Apostle, St. James.

God is high, says St. Augustine ; if you elevate yourself, He flies from you ; if you abase yourself, He descends to you.

A second means to draw down new graces, is, to thank God incessantly for those He has already bestowed upon us, and to say with David : "I will sing Thy mercies eternally, O my God. My soul, bless the Lord, and never forget His benefits. What shall I render to the Lord for all He has done for me?" To these words of the Prophet, let us add those of St. Bernard : "My spirit is overwhelmed when I consider the benefits of God ; I cannot return worthy thanks, but my soul abhors ingratitude."

A third means, is, to correspond promptly to the inspirations of God, doing without delay what the Holy Spirit suggests for the love and glory of God. All the graces of God are so many sparks of that divine fire which Jesus Christ came to bring upon earth, to enkindle a great flame in our hearts ; but languor, sloth, and want of courage in timid souls, extinguish it.

Do not extinguish the spirit, says St. Paul ; it is a light which reveals the truth to us ; we should gather and preserve it carefully, lest it be extinguished through our fault ; it should serve us as a guide and rule. At one time, this spirit is a desire which God gives us to perform a certain act of virtue ; we should faithfully correspond thereto ; our fidelity will, perhaps, be the source of great happiness to us, as has been the case with many Saints under similar circumstances. Again, it is with a spirit of mortification that God inspires us, and which He

demands of us. If we listen to His voice, this grace will produce great fruits within us ; it will be the cause of our sanctification. If we despise it, this contempt will, perhaps, be the commencement of our loss, and of our eternal unhappiness. If to-day, says David, you hear the voice of God, harden not your hearts.

In fine, if you would shield yourself from the danger of abusing the grace of God, give yourself up to recollection ; fear dissipation. St. Bernard cries out : “ I feel a great sadness of heart and continual grief when I see many Religious so light, so easily yielding to dissipation, to jests and idle words ; I fear exceedingly, that, not remembering the mercies of the Lord, and being ungrateful for the numberless benefits they have received from Him, they will be abandoned by grace which they do not appreciate.”

Recollection preserves many goods which dissipation is wont quickly to lose. How strange, that man can give himself up to joy in this life, which is only an exile, and where he is exposed to countless dangers. By a certain levity of mind, and a contempt of our faults, we do not feel the miseries of our conscience, but often vainly laugh, when in all reason, we ought to weep.

There is no true liberty and solid joy but in the fear of God, and a good conscience ; to souls of this character, St. Paul addresses these words : “ Be always joyful, pray without ceasing, give thanks

to God for all things ; for God wills that you do all in Jesus Christ.

God does not communicate Himself to a soul that is in constant dissipation, incessantly occupied with a thousand superfluous cares ; such a one is not in a state to hear the voice of Him who says : I will lead her into solitude and there speak to her heart. St. Gregory remarks, that when Jesus wishes to inflame a soul with His divine love, one of the first graces He imparts, is, to give a strong attraction for the spirit of interior recollection. But this grace is often abused. The most ordinary cause of our remissness, is a want of recollection and a guard over ourselves.

A fourth means to draw upon us the graces of God, is ardently to desire them : “ Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice, for they shall be filled.” By these words, Jesus Christ teaches us that He is always ready to impart His graces to those who earnestly desire them. He invites us to excite this desire within us, when He says : “ If any one thirst, let him come to me and drink.” He said to the Samaritan woman : “ If thou didst know the gift of God, and who He is that asketh of thee to drink, thou wouldst ask of Him, and He would give thee living water.” In speaking thus to this poor sinner, He stirred up in her heart a great desire of His grace. Lord, she cried out, as soon as her eyes were opened, give me of this water !

David says : “ O my God, to Thee do I watch at break of day ; for Thee my soul has thirsted, oh ! how many ways ; my flesh longeth for Thee exceedingly ; for I am in a desert and pathless land, where there is no water.” Understand, by the words of the Prophet, that, in order to burn with this supernatural thirst, to desire grace with ardor, we must have a contempt for the muddy waters of the vain pleasures of this world. When, O carnal man, will you return from your wanderings, and comprehend, like this holy King, that in this desert land, you will find no road to conduct you to happiness, no water to refresh you ! When will you understand the gift of God ?

In order to excite in yourself an ardent desire of the graces of God, join to the sight of your miseries and nothingness, the thought of the infinite goodness of God, who is ready to heal you, to open to you the treasure of His graces, as soon as you will open your heart by fervent desires to receive them.

A fifth means to draw down the graces of God, is, prayer. The Saints teach us that prayer is the source of all graces ; that by it, our sighs and groans ascend to God, and we draw down the divine succor promised by Jesus Christ in these words : “ Ask, and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you.”

THIRD DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book I. chapter XXI.

SECOND READING.

On the Death of the Just.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

The last privilege of virtue is the glorious Death of the Just. At the moment of death, the sinner receives the punishment of his sins, and the just man, the reward of his deserts, according to Ecclesiasticus : " He that fears the Lord shall be happy in the last day ; and, in the day of his death, he shall be blessed ; " that is, he shall have the reward of his labors. St. John, in his Revelation, declares the same to us more clearly saying, that : He heard a voice from heaven which commanded him to write, and the words it dictated were these : " Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord, because the Holy Ghost tells them, that they shall rest from their labors, for their works follow them." How is it possible, then, for a just man that has received such a promise as this from Almighty God, Himself, to be alarmed at the hour of his death, seeing that he

is on the point of receiving what he has been laboring for all his lifetime?

For this reason, Job says, speaking of the just man : That he shall be as bright in the evening as the sun at noonday ; and when he shall imagine himself to be quite spent, he shall arise like the morning star. St. Gregory, writing upon these words, says : “ This morning brightness shines upon the just man in the evening, because, at the hour of his death, he perceives some glimmerings of the glory prepared for him ; and, therefore, when others weep and are the most dejected, he is most comforted in God, in whom he has placed his trust. Solomon, in his Proverbs, testifies the same, when he says : “ The wicked man shall be rejected because of his sins, but the just shall be in hope.” Hence, could any one have greater confidence than St. Martin on his death-bed ? Seeing the devil by him, he said : “ What dost thou here, cruel beast ? thou shalt find no mortal sin in me ; therefore, I shall be received into Abraham’s bosom in peace.” Again, what greater confidence can there be, than that of St. Dominic ? Seeing his religious brethren in tears, he comforted them, saying : Be not afflicted, my children, for I shall do you much more service where I am going, than I could do you here. How could that man be afraid of death, who was so certain of his own salvation, as to promise to render others participants in his happiness ?

The just man is not afraid of death, because he has been afraid of life;—the fear a man has of death, being the effects of a bad life. He is not afraid of death, because he has spent all his life in preparing himself to die well; and he that stands always upon his guard, has no need to fear his enemies. He is not afraid of death, because the whole employment of his life has been to lay up good works that will profit him at this moment. He is not afraid of death, because the many services he has done his Judge, will dispose Him to be kind and favorable at that time. He is not afraid of death, because death is not death, but only a slumber to a just man; it is not death, it is but a change; it is not death, it is but the last day of his toils and labors; it is not death, but only the way that leads to life, and the last step by which he mounts to immortality.

What could inspire any dread of death? Could it be the sufferings that usually accompany it? But, does he not know that these are only childbed pangs, that give him birth to that eternity, the constant and only object of his desires,—the thought of which could alone make this life endurable? Does he fear the rigor of God's judgment? the presence of the infernal legions? But, has he not in this good and powerful God whom he has always sought to please, a Redeemer, an Advocate, a Protector? Does he fear the horrors of the grave? but does he not know that he must sow a corruptible body, that it may rise incorruptible and spiritual?

If it is true, that the end crowns the work ; and if, as Seneca says, “ we must judge of all the rest by the last day ; ” if the end of the good is so calm and happy, and that of the wicked so disturbed and painful ; is any other consideration necessary to detach us from vice and inspire us with the love of virtue ? Ah ! what are all the riches, pleasures, honors, and joys of the world to me, if, in the end, I am to be precipitated into the abyss of hell ? And what have I to dread from all the evils of this life, if they are to be followed by an eternal peace and happiness ?—If they are for me an assured pledge of future glory ?

Let the wicked manage their affairs in this world with all possible cunning ; what will their craft avail but to procure such things as will serve to make them more proud, more vain and sensual ; more able to sin, more powerless to do good ; and make death so much the more bitter, after a life of pleasure and enjoyment ? The chief business of a wise man is to prepare the means of reaching his end. Therefore, if we regard him as a skilful physician, who knows what remedies to prescribe for the recovery of health, we must consider that man truly wise, who knows how to regulate his life so as to secure a good and holy death, and a favorable judgment.

To confirm what I have advanced, I shall here give two remarkable examples taken from the Dialogues of Pope, St. Gregory ; they will show us how happy is the death of the just.

There was at Rome, says he, a man named Servulus, very destitute of the goods of fortune, but very rich in those of grace ; his usual station was under a porch before St. Clement's church ; he had no living, but the alms of those who passed by. His limbs were so crippled, that he could neither rise, nor sit on his bed, nor so much as raise his hand to his mouth, nor change position. His mother and brother kept him company and assisted him ; by their hands, he distributed among the poor all superfluous alms. He could not read ; yet, he had purchased some books of Scripture, and when devout persons came to visit him, he would request them to read some passages to him ; and, in this manner, he became sufficiently versed in Holy Scripture. In his most grievous sufferings, he was always careful to give thanks to God ; and he employed himself, day and night, in singing hymns and canticles in His honor.

At last, the time appointed by our Lord to reward his great patience being come, Servulus fell extremely ill. Perceiving that his death was at hand, he summoned certain strangers to whom he had extended hospitality, exhorting them to rise and unite with him in praising God for the hope he entertained of his approaching end. But he suddenly ceased singing, crying out : Silence ! do you not hear the hymns of praise resounding in heaven ? And listening thus with the ear of his heart to the voice he heard within himself, his holy

soul departed from his body. Immediately, an extraordinary fragrance filled all present with ineffable delight, convincing them that the holy man really heard the songs of praise and joy with which his beautiful soul was received into heaven. One of our Religious was present when this prodigy happened; he is still living, and, with tears, he testifies that the witnesses of this death never lost the sweet odor until the body was buried.

About the time I resolved to enter into a monastery, there lived at Rome an aged woman, named Redempta; she wore the religious habit, and dwelt near the church of the Blessed Virgin. She had formerly been under the care of a certain holy virgin called *Hirundina*, held in great esteem for her virtue, having led a solitary life among the mountains of *Prestre*. This Redempta had as disciples, or novices, two other young maidens; the name of one was Romula; as for the other, who is still living, I know her by sight, but cannot tell her name. These three virgins lived in the same house, leading a very poor but holy life. Romula, however, surpassed her companion by the merits she acquired, being a woman of wonderful patience, of most perfect obedience, of extraordinary recollection, a very strict observer of silence, and much given to prayer.

But it often happens that those who appear perfect in the eyes of men, are still subject to some imperfections before God. Let us make a very

simple comparison : it is not rare for persons ignorant of the art of painting, to extol a picture, although it has not yet received the finishing touches ; but the artist who knows that much yet is wanting, does not desist from his labor until he has perfected the work, notwithstanding the praise bestowed upon it. Thus did Jesus Christ deal with Romula. He was pleased to purify her by a universal paralysis which confined her to bed for many years, deprived of the use of her limbs. Her pains and sufferings never moved her to the least impatience ; on the contrary, the weakness of her members seemed to give new vigor to her virtues ; so, that the less able she was to do anything else, the more she exercised herself in devotion and prayer.

One night she called her mother Redempta, who had trained these two disciples as if they had been her own daughters, and said to her : Come hither, my dear mother, come hither, I pray you. Redempta went immediately to her with her other disciple, as both of them have since related many times to several persons ; so that the affair has now become public, and I myself had an account of it. About midnight, as they were sitting at her bedside, there suddenly appeared a light from heaven filling the whole chamber. So dazzling was the brightness, that all present were seized with fear ; and, as they afterwards related, their bodies were chilled, through excessive terror.

Unable to bear the extraordinary brightness of this light, Romula comforted her mother trembling with fear, saying with love and sweetness: Be not afraid, dear mother, for I am not dying yet; and repeating these words many times, the light lessened by degrees, until it entirely disappeared; but the sweet odor, on the contrary, continued for the space of three days. On the night of the third day, she called her mistress again, and asked for the Holy Viaticum. She received it, and scarce had Redempta and her companion gone from Romula's bedside, than they heard, at the entrance of the cell door, two choirs of musicians, men and women, as near as they could judge by the difference of voices; the men chanted psalms and the women responded; and thus performing the rites of this celestial funeral, her holy soul quitted the prison of the body and departed for heaven. The music and sweet fragrance ascended with her; so that the higher she mounted, the fainter became the heavenly harmony, till finally both entirely ceased.

Many more examples could be brought forward on this subject; but these will suffice to show how peaceful, sweet, and happy is the death of the just. True, all do not receive these sensible signs of predestination; but all are children of God; death for all, is the term of their labors, the beginning of their recompense; and all at death are strengthened by grace and the testimony of a good conscience. Thus, the glorious St. Ambrose comforted himself,

saying : I have not lived so as to have any reason to be sorry that I was ever born ; nor am I afraid to die, because I have a good Master. If such graces and favors seem incredible, let us reflect on the goodness of God, which leads Him to love and honor the good, and we shall not call it in question. For, since this infinitely good God has stooped so low as to take human flesh and die upon a cross for the love of man, it is not astonishing that He consoles at death, those whose salvation cost Him so dear ; nor should we be surprised that He honors them with His favors during their life, if, after their death, He is to receive them into His everlasting dwelling and make them participants of His glory.

Consider, then, attentively what this good is, to the acquisition of which I invite you : think whether you would have any reason to repent, should you purchase it at the cost of the whole world. The only cause why the wicked do not appreciate it, is, that they are ignorant of its value. Hence, the Saviour of the world says, that the kingdom of heaven is like to a hidden treasure. It is, indeed, a real treasure, but hidden from the eyes of others, known only to him who possesses it. Therefore, nothing can serve as a key to open this treasure ; for all that mortal tongue is able to express, falls far short of what it truly is. The true key, therefore, is the divine light, experience, and the practice of virtue. Pray to our Lord, and you will discover

this treasure ; you will find God, Himself, in whom all goods are contained. You will then perceive with how much reason the Prophet said : “ Blessed is the people whose Lord is their God ; for what can be wanting to him who is in possession of this good ? ”

O blind and senseless men, what are you doing ? whither are you going ? what are you seeking ? why do you leave the fountain of Paradise for the muddy streams of the world ? Why do you not follow the salutary advice of the Scripture ? Taste and see how sweet is the Lord. Try this, at least, once ; have confidence in the word of God ; commence courageously, and at each step in the path that leads to heaven, you will find your doubts and illusions dispersed.

With what joy did that man of the gospel (*St. Matth. XIII.*) sell all his possessions, to purchase the field in which he found a treasure ! Will the Christian, then, who has heard of the value of this treasure do nothing to secure it ? How astonishing ! If an imposter should affirm that a great treasure was concealed in some part of your house, you could not resist the desire to search in order to ascertain if there was any truth in his words ; and yet, when the infallible word of God assures you that you will find a treasure within your own soul, you have not the courage to seek for it ! Oh ! if you knew how precious is this treasure ! if you knew how important it is for you to search for it ! Oh !

that you could understand how near is God to those who call upon Him in truth !

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapter III.

FOURTH READING.

Considerations to excite a Penitent to Contrition.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

To excite in your soul a lively sorrow, you should place before you the whole course of your life, and represent to your conscience all the sins with which you have, for so long a time, defiled it ; and consider the ill-use you have made of so many graces received from God. And, as sin is a turning away from the Sovereign Good, and from the end for which man was created, consider attentively what this end is, and you will clearly perceive how widely you have departed from it. If you reflect for what end God created you, and at the same time examine the end you have had in view, you will see how opposed you have lived to the designs of God. He created you for Himself, that you might employ your understanding, your memory, and your will in His service, placing all your love and trust in Him ; but, on the contrary, unmindful of

these obligations, you have, with base ingratitude, made use of all these gifts to serve the world and to gain the love of creatures. You have loved the world, you have placed your hope and delight therein ; and thus you have given to created things what belongs to their Lord and yours. From these reflections, you will see how unfaithful you have been to the first of God's commandments, which obliges you to love Him ; you will see in what forgetfulness of God you have lived, since you have scarcely thought of Him during all your life ; you will perceive how ungrateful you have been for His benefits, since, perhaps, you have never thought of returning thanks for them ; you will see the little esteem you have had for His commandments, since you have so often violated them ; you will perceive that you have been continually wanting in love for Him, who so merits to be loved,—bestowing your affections on trifles. In fine, you will discover that you have fallen into such blindness as to give your heart to poor worms of earth, having no regard for the exalted Majesty of your Creator.

Having considered the number and quality of your sins, reflect also on what they have caused you to lose ; by this you will understand how precious is the treasure you have forfeited. This reflection will, doubtless, excite you to sorrow and repentance ; nor would your sorrow be available unless based on this motive. St. Chrysostom says that the only loss repaired by tears, is that caused by sin. The

following considerations are calculated to excite you to this contrition.

1. By one mortal sin we lose the grace of the Holy Ghost ;—a grace so excellent, that God cannot in this life, bestow a greater on any mortal creature ; we lose also charity and the love of God, which always accompany this grace ; which gift far exceeds all the favors of earthly princes so coveted by men. By mortal sin, we lose infused virtues and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that beautify the soul in the sight of God ; that shield and strengthen it against the assaults of the demon, although faith and hope are not always forfeited. We lose all right to the inheritance of heaven flowing from this grace, since grace leads to glory ; we lose the gift of spiritual adoption, which makes us children of God, giving us the hearts of children towards Him ; this loss entails the loss of that paternal Providence which God exercises over His children. We also lose the peace and tranquillity resulting from a good conscience. We lose the favors and consolations of the Holy Ghost, as also the fruit and merit of all the good works performed during life, previous to this unfortunate hour ; and with this, all participation in the spiritual goods of the Church, which are not communicated to the sinner, in the manner in which the soul enjoyed them while in the state of grace.

But among all these losses, the most grievous, the most worthy of our tears, is the loss of God ; for this loss is the root and source of all others. Think

of this, O Christians : To lose God, is to cease to have God for a Father, a Pastor, a Protector ; it is to change this most merciful Father into a declared enemy and most severe Judge. This misfortune you should bewail with tears of blood ; it was of a similar misfortune that the Prophet, Osee, said : “ Rejoice not, O Israel, as the other nations ; renounce thy pleasures, for thou hast turned away from thy God.”

Judge from this, whether they who have lost so precious a treasure, should not bitterly lament, seeing that, from the height of glory and riches, they have fallen into an abyss of miseries. What sorrow, what confusion should overwhelm a soul thus precipitated into these calamities ! Open thy eyes, wretched soul, says a holy Doctor, and see what thou wast, and what thou art now ; where thou wast, and where thou art now. Thou wast the spouse of the Most High, the temple of the living God, the throne of the true Solomon, the seat of wisdom ; thou wast the companion of Angels and heir of heaven. Such thou wast ; and as many times as I say : Thou *wast*, thou shouldst groan, for thou art no longer what thou wast. Weep ; the heavens, the Church, the Saints, weep over thee ; St. Paul sheds tears, because thou hast sinned and not done penance ; the Prophets weep, because God’s wrath is ready to burst upon thee ; Jeremiah sheds more tears over thee than he shed over Jerusalem, overthrown by the just wrath of Heaven.

2. If you go farther, and consider the Majesty and goodness of that God against whom you have sinned, you will find still greater reason to lament. It cannot be doubted, that the more exalted the person offended, the more grievous is the offense; whence it follows, that if the person be of infinite dignity, the offense committed against him acquires a gravity, in some measure, infinite. Thus, the more deeply you penetrate the immensity of God, the more clearly will you discover the malice and enormity of sin. Lift up, then, your eyes on high and behold, if you can, the exceeding Majesty of God; consider His riches, His dignity, His wisdom, His beauty, His glory, His goodness, His benignity, and His power; and, thereby, you will comprehend, in some degree, how great a crime it is to have offended Him.

But, among all the perfections of God, that which ordinarily affects true penitents, is, His goodness, particularly when they have experienced the happy effects thereof. This goodness is revealed in many ways; but in nothing is it so visibly manifested, as in the Incarnation and Passion of the Son of God, and in the institution of the Holy Sacrament wherein He daily offers Himself for us, or gives Himself to us by Holy Communion, and establishes His dwelling among us. God manifests this goodness in a remarkable manner towards His elect. He imparts to them so many graces, so much joy and consolation, that human weakness sometimes is unable to

support the weight thereof. History relates that an aged Father of the Desert being one day in prayer, cried out : O Lord, restrain a little the torrent of Thy consolations ; at another time : Depart from me, O Lord, for I cannot support the excess of Thy sweetness. These are the favors, the caresses, the liberal gifts which the devout are wont to receive from the infinite goodness of God. It is not astonishing, that our Lord should give them a taste of the cup of His consolations, after having drunk for them the bitter chalice of His Passion !

Therefore, attentively considering this marvelous goodness, and, at the same time, calling to mind how often he has offended against it, has not man just reason to bewail, lament, and wish that all the members of his body might be converted into as many eyes to weep for his sins ?

3. Besides what we have just said, consider the great injury sin does to God, and you will see what reason you have to repent of it ; for, as often as you sin, you exercise in your heart a sort of judgment, most prejudicial to God, although you do not perceive it. On the one hand, you consider the fruit of sin, that is, the pleasure it procures you ; on the other, you consider the offense you commit against God, by which you lose His friendship ; you then put in the balance, God and your interest, and you consent to forfeit the favor of God, rather than forego this sinful gratification.

Can anything be imagined more horrible, more insulting to the Majesty of God, than to choose so vile and base a thing in preference to Him? This is to imitate the madness of the Jews, who, when called upon to make a choice between Jesus and Barabbas, preferred that robber to Jesus Christ; this is to deprive God, as far as in us lies, of the glory due to Him as our last End, and give it to our interest and pleasure; for, to set a higher esteem on a fleeting gratification than on God Himself, is, undoubtedly, as far as in our power, taking dominion from the Creator and giving it to the creature:—a crime so great, that God commands the heavens to be amazed thereat, saying, by the Prophet, Jeremias: “Be astonished, O ye heavens! and ye gates thereof, be desolate; for my people have done two great evils: they have forsaken the fountain of living water, and have digged to themselves broken cisterns that hold no water.”

Consider, then, how often you have offered this insult to God, and tremble. Let your eyes become two fountains of tears, to weep day and night for so great a disorder. Consider, against whom you have sinned, for what you have sinned; what you have lost and what you have gained. Conceive a just shame now while there is time; delay not until you be covered with eternal confusion on the day of the Lord,—the day of His terrible judgment.

4. To excite in your soul this detestation of sin, consider attentively the hatred that God bears to it.

This hatred is so great that no one can fully comprehend it ; if all created understandings were united in one, and if all tongues could be made but one, this hatred could never be expressed or conceived ; for God, who is infinitely good and perfect, has an infinite love for good and an infinite hatred for evil ; hence, He recompenses the one with eternal glory, and punishes the other with everlasting torments, and with the privation of an infinite good. It is also certain, that God hates sin, as it merits to be hated ; that is, in proportion to the deformity which is in sin ; now, as this deformity is infinite, being against a God of infinite majesty, it follows that the hatred which God bears to it, is infinite.

5. The most efficacious means to increase this sorrow, is, to meditate on the magnitude and number of God's benefits ; for the more you consider how good God has been to you, the greater confusion you will experience for having been so ungrateful to Him. Remember it is He who created you, who redeemed you, who still preserves you ; that, by His grace you have been baptized, preserved from many dangers, and laden with countless favors. All that the heavens include, all that the earth contains, are benefits from God ; all the members and senses of your body are His gifts ; every moment of your life is a favor from His liberal hand. The bread you eat, the earth upon which you tread, the sun which gives you light, and whatever serves for the preservation of your life, are presents which He makes

you. And, finally, to comprise all in one word, all the goods of this world are benefits from Him, since He created them for you.

Therefore, should anything afflict you more deeply than to have offended God? that God who has carried you, as it were, in His arms; whose goodness sustains you; whose spirit has given you life; who warms you by His sun, who governs you by His Providence; in whom you live, move, and have your being.—That God who, during all your disorders, never ceased to do you good. Oh! what blindness! what ingratitude! thus to repay so many benefits!

In fine, consider the love of Jesus Christ for you. He has shed abundance of tears for you, offered many prayers; suffered many insults, undergone many hardships; received countless affronts, endured excessive tortures. It is certain that our sins crucified Him; He took them all upon Himself, and wished to bear them, partly to satisfy the justice of God, and partly to show us how much He hates them, since He immolated Himself to expiate them. Hence, what cause have you not to melt into tears when you consider how often, by your sins, you have crucified anew this divine Saviour!

FOURTH DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book I. chapter xxv.

SECOND READING.

Dispositions necessary for a true Conversion.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

The first thing to be done by him who is resolved to change his life, and consecrate himself to the service of God, is to be well penetrated with the importance of this undertaking, and to conceive the correct idea of it. He must regard it as the most serious of all affairs; as the most precious of treasures, as the most useful of sciences; or rather, as the only affair, the only treasure, the only true science. "Learn, O Israel, where is wisdom, where is strength, where is understanding, that thou mayest know also where is length of days and of life, where is the light of the eyes and peace. (*Baruch* III., 14.).—"Let the wise man," says the Lord, "not glory in his wisdom, and let not the strong man glory in his strength, and let not the rich man glory in his riches; but let him that glorieth, glory in this; that he understandeth and knoweth me, for I am the Lord." (*Jeremias* IX., 23, 24.) This is the sum

of all goods ; whoever believes himself perfect among the children of men, if he has not this knowledge, accompanied by virtue, his science and glory are vain.

This all-important affair is recommended in many ways in our Holy Books ; all creatures in heaven and on earth invite us to it ; all laws, human and divine, prescribe it ; we are exhorted thereto by the teachings of the Church and by the example of countless Saints who, illumined from above, conceived such contempt for the world, and so great a love for virtue, that many among them suffered the most cruel tortures rather than offend God and incur His displeasure even for one moment. In fine, all the considerations which we have advanced, oblige us to undertake this affair ; for all proclaim the excellence thereof. Each of these motives, attentively considered, would suffice to convince us of the importance of this affair ; what power, consequently, would not the union of these motives have, to convince him who is resolved to undertake it, of the greatness, of the glory of this enterprise ; and make him understand how just and reasonable it is to apply thereto with all possible zeal and ardor.

This is the first principle, or, rather the first disposition with which we should be penetrated, in order to engage successfully in this important business.

After considering the greatness and importance of this enterprise, the second thing which you ought to

do, is, to arm your heart with generous courage against the obstacles and combats to which you may be subjected; convinced that you could not purchase at too dear a rate, the glory of succeeding in so noble a design. Moreover, is not every great undertaking attended by difficulties? You must, then, in your first steps in this career, expect that hell will assail you with all its force, and employ against you all the means at its disposal. The flesh, a slave of pleasure, corrupted in all its inclinations by the mortal venom of the old serpent, will incessantly entice you, recalling to your mind past enjoyments; bad habits, no less powerful than nature itself, will seek to oppose this change in your life, exaggerating the difficulties of it: these indeed, are great; for, to induce a man to adopt a mode of life directly opposed to that which, by long habit, has become second nature, is, in some measure, to seek to change the course of an impetuous river. You will also find the world, like a cruel and powerful beast, endeavoring sometimes, to force you by its example, and dazzle you by the deceitful splendor of its vanities and false pleasures; sometimes, to vanquish you by the persecutions and ridicule of the wicked. To these enemies will be added another infinitely more formidable, the most crafty, the most ancient, the most dangerous corrupter of men: the demon will assail you with all the cruelty he is accustomed to exercise against those who are newly converted.

These are your enemies ; learn to know them ; expect to meet them at every step, that you may not be surprised by their attacks, as if unsuspected. Call to mind the warning of the Wise Man : “ Son, when thou comest to the service of God, stand in justice and in fear, and prepare thy soul for temptation (*Eccli.* II., 1).” Do not suppose, therefore, that we invite you to banquets, to sports and pleasures ; oh ! no ; we summon you to clothe yourself with sword and buckler to fight the battles of the Lord. You can, it is true, rely upon numerous and powerful helps ; however, we must not conceal from you that the beginning is hard and accompanied with serious difficulties ; you must anticipate them, that you may not be surprised when they appear before you ; but, be convinced, that what efforts soever you will be obliged to make, how heavy soever be the trials you will have to endure ; the crown for which you fight, merits still more on your part.

But the aspect of so many enemies must not cast you into discouragement ; if vice has its auxiliaries, virtue also has its support. You have divine grace to oppose to corrupt nature ; God, to the demon, good habits, to bad customs ; heavenly spirits, to the fallen angels ; salutary examples and the exhortations of the Saints, to bad example and the persecutions of the wicked ; the chaste delights and the consolations of the Holy Spirit, to the pleasures of the world : consequently, you can fight with great advantage. Against each of your enemies you have

means of defense incomparably more powerful ; what can nature do against grace ? the demon against the Most High ? hell against heaven ? what are the pleasures of the senses compared with the delights of the spirit ?

After being well penetrated with these two dispositions, the first thing the newly-converted should do, is, to establish himself in the firm resolution never to commit mortal sin. This new disposition is the foundation of virtue ; this it is that secures to us the friendship, the grace of God, and the right to the kingdom of heaven ; this makes us children of God, temples of the Holy Ghost, living members of Jesus Christ ; and, with all these titles, confers on us the right to share in all the goods of the Church. As long as the soul preserves this good purpose, she is in sanctifying grace, in the state of salvation ; but, as soon as she discards it, she is blotted out from the book of life ; she is registered on the book of perdition, and relegated to the kingdom of darkness.

Hence, the holy Martyrs endured the most cruel tortures rather than commit one mortal sin, and thus forfeit, in a moment, the grace and friendship of God. They were well aware that, in repenting immediately after their sin, they could, like St. Peter, obtain pardon for it ; but, to be in disgrace with their God was, in their eyes, so great a misfortune, that they preferred to suffer all the tor-

ments of the world, rather than to incur it for even one instant.

Among these examples, the most remarkable found in the Old Testament, is the mother of the Machabees ; and, in the New, Felicita and Symphorosa, mothers of seven children. These admirable women assisted at the martyrdom of their sons ; they beheld them torn to pieces ; but, far from losing courage at this sorrowful spectacle, they sustained and animated that of their children ; exhorting them to die generously for the faith, and happy to mingle their own blood with that of their sons in so holy a cause.

Consider to what an extent the Saints carried their horror for sin. How many proofs of this we might bring forward, if we examined their lives ! Here, we see them rolling among thorns and briars ; again, burying themselves under heaps of snow ; at another time, plunging into frozen ponds ;—all this, to extinguish the heat of the flesh excited by the enemy of their purity.

Let him who wishes to walk in the path which we have pointed out, endeavor to strengthen this good purpose in his soul ; in order, that justly appreciating the friendship of God, he may place it above all worldly advantages, and be ready generously, to sacrifice everything, if necessary, to preserve so precious a treasure. Let this disposition be as the pivot, the soul of his life, the chief end of all his actions : that in the prayers he will address

to God, in the frequentation of the Sacraments, in hearing the word of God ; in his spiritual readings, in the contemplation of the wonders of creation ; in his meditations on the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ and on the benefits of God ;—that, in all things, he may have in view to obtain and strengthen in his heart the desire, the resolution, never more to offend a God who has so many claims to his love. Let him judge of his progress in virtue by the advancement he will have made in this holy disposition and in the salutary fear of sin.

He who seeks to drive a nail firmly into a piece of wood, is not content to give one, two, or three strokes of the hammer ; he strikes until he is wearied. Be not satisfied with some slight efforts to establish this good purpose in your heart ; labor constantly and without relaxation for this end ; profit by every occasion that presents itself. Whether you read or meditate ; in all you see and hear, have always in view to increase in the love of God and in horror for sin : the progress you will make on the one hand, will be in exact proportion to that which you will have made on the other.

To give more solidity to this twofold sentiment, be persuaded, and firmly believe that all the calamities, all the scourges that have desolated the world since the creation ; that all the torments of the reprobate united, are an evil infinitely less grievous, less frightful, than a single mortal sin. This, doubtless, is neither the opinion nor the practice of those

who live in the darkness of Egypt ; but, is it astonishing that the blind see not, that the dead feel not ? of what consequence to the one is the extent of an object, or to the other, that the blow be deadly ?

It is all-important to observe, that in the struggle upon which you enter, you have not to fight against flesh and blood, but against demons, spiritual enemies ; consequently, you should not rely upon the strength of arm or the fleetness of foot, but upon the attention and clear-sightedness of the eyes. The primary cause of all sin, is error, the illusion of the understanding, which directs the will. Hence, our enemies, in order to pervert the will, seek to pervert the understanding which guides it. For this purpose they clothe evil with the appearance of good ; present vice under the image of virtue, and so disguise their suggestions as to give them the semblance of a lawful right, rather than a diabolical temptation. If they excite us to avarice, anger, and thoughts of revenge, they strive to convince us that nothing is more reasonable than what we desire ; that it would be folly to entertain other sentiments. They screen themselves under the mask of reason, that they may more easily seduce those who have at heart to obey its dictates and conform to its prescriptions. Man, therefore, must have his eyes constantly open, and watchful to detect the hook under the bait, and not allow himself to be surprised by a false appearance of good.

We have shown that, in the first place, you must avoid all mortal sin ; but this is not saying that you can allow yourself the liberty of committing venial sins ; far from it. Be on your guard against this, I conjure you ; avoid imitating those relaxed souls who yield without scruple, without hesitation, to faults that seem light. Remember that : “ He who despises small faults will soon fall into great ones.” Bear in mind the proverb : For a nail, one loses a shoe ; for a shoe, a horse, for a horse, a rider. Behold these houses overthrown ; their ruin commenced by a few drops of rain. Remember that if, in all truth, it can be said, that neither six, nor six thousand venial sins could make a single mortal sin ; St. Augustine also says, in all truth : Despise not venial sins because they are light, but fear them because they are many. Animalcules, almost imperceptible, sometimes cause death to men when their number is great. What is smaller than a grain of sand ? and yet, load a vessel with grains of sand and it will instantly sink. What is less than a drop of water ? and, nevertheless, drops of water form large rivers and impetuous torrents which overthrow the most solid edifices. St. Augustine does not pretend to say that many venial sins can constitute a mortal sin ; but they lead to it, and often place the soul in the danger of falling into it. This is an incontestable truth ; hence, St. Gregory says : “ Small faults are, in one sense, more dangerous than great ones ; because, being in no illusion with regard to the enormity of

the one, a man is more likely to correct ; whereas, making little account of the others, he falls into them more frequently, and commits them with less repugnance and remorse."

Finally, venial sin, how small soever it be, ceases not to be prejudicial to the soul. It extinguishes the fervor of piety, troubles peace of conscience, cools the ardor of charity ; enervates the heart, weakens the spiritual life ; and, to a certain degree, resists the Holy Spirit, by placing an obstacle to His divine operations. Let us, then, zealously struggle against it ; the weakest enemy, when neglected, may become dangerous and cause death.

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapter IV.

FOURTH READING.

On Heaven.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

Any one of the considerations which we have proposed, should suffice to lead us to the love of virtue ; but the heart of man is so hard, that very often he resists the force of all these truths. I shall, then, add here another motive no less powerful than the preceding, namely : the joy and the magnitude of the reward promised to virtue, in the possession

of the glory of Heaven; in this we have two remarkable things to consider: one is the beauty of the place, which is the empyreal Heaven, and the other, the glory of the King who resides there with all his elect.

For what regards the beauty of the place, although no tongue is able to express it, we shall endeavor to conceive some idea of it. The first thing to be considered, is the end for which this excellent abode was created; for, generally, the means of ascertaining the worth of a thing, is to inquire into the design of it. The design of this place is to manifest God's glory. And, although, as Solomon says, the Lord has made all things for Himself, it is evident, nevertheless, that He particularly created this place for this end, because in it, He manifests the splendor of His glory. Therefore, as the great king Assuerus, who formerly reigned over one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, made with all imaginable pomp, a solemn feast in the city of Suza, which feast lasted one hundred and four-score days, to let his subjects see how rich and powerful he was; so, this Almighty King was pleased to make a solemn feast, not for a hundred and four-score days, but for all eternity, to manifest the immensity of His riches. Isaias speaks of this feast when he says: The Lord will make on this mountain, a banquet for all peoples; a feast of wines and delicate meats; that is to say, of the most delicious viands. But, if God has prepared this banquet to make known the greatness

of His glory, we must needs believe, that, since this glory is so great, the magnificence of the place in which it will be displayed, must be proportionate to this glory.

We shall be better qualified to judge of the beauty of this happy abode, if we consider the power and riches of the Lord who has chosen it for His dwelling. With a single word He created the whole world out of nothing, and one word would be sufficient to destroy it. Nay, with one word, God could create not only one world, but millions of them ; and, with another, annihilate them. And what is far more wonderful, He has made all that He has fashioned, without the least trouble ; nor was it more difficult for Him to create the noblest Seraph, than to form the smallest insect ; because His infinite power can do all it wills, and accomplish all it pleases, by His will alone.

But, if the power of God is so great ; if His Name is so glorious ; if He has a love for this glory proportioned to its greatness, what must be the beauty of the place of which He has made choice for the manifestation of it in all its splendor ? What could be wanting to the Architect in order to bring this work to perfection ? Power ?—He is infinitely powerful ; wisdom ?—He is infinitely wise ; will ?—He is infinitely good ; wealth ?—He is infinitely rich. What, then, I ask, could be wanting to the beauty of a work in which infinite Perfection desired to manifest Himself in full ? This work was

accomplished by the omnipotence of the Father, by the wisdom of the Son, by the goodness of the Holy Spirit; in it, love commands, wisdom ordains, and omnipotence executes the desires of love and the plans of an infinite Intelligence.

There is another important consideration to be made on this subject, which is, that God has prepared this superb place not only for His own honor, but also, for the glory of His elect. Let us observe, I beg you, how solicitous God is to honor them and to accomplish what he has promised. This plainly appears from His actions, since, even in this mortal life, He has subjected all things in this world to their dominion. How wonderful was the authority of Joshua, when he commanded the sun to stand still in the midst of its course! Does it not seem that he held in his hands the reins that govern the world, thus to command this luminary? God, as the Scripture says, obeying the voice of man. How great was the power of the Prophet Isaias, when he proposed to King Ezechias, either to have the sun go forward ten degrees upon the dial, or backward, both being equally easy to him! How astonishing, also, the power of the Prophet Elias, when he shut up the waters and the clouds of heaven as long as he thought fit; and, at another time, commanded them, by the power of his word, to pour down their rain!

Nor is it only during the lifetime of the Saints that God is pleased to give them such power; He

continues the same even after their death ; He confers it on their very bones and ashes. Who can forbear praising God when he reads that the bones of the Prophet Elisha, had the power to restore to life a dead man who had accidentally been thrown by robbers into his grave ! Who will deny that God bestows great favors upon his Saints, since, on the day St. Clement was martyred, the sea opened for three miles, to give passage to those who wished to behold the relics of this glorious champion of Christ ! God desires that the whole Church should celebrate a feast in honor of St. Peter's Chains, that we may understand how much He esteems the bodies of His Saints, since He commands us to pay such solemn respect to the very fetters that bound them in prison.

If we consider, on the one hand, that Heaven is the universal reward for the services of all the Saints ; and on the other, how magnificent our Lord is in His gifts, how wonderful must the splendor of this glory be ! It is an abyss which we cannot fathom.

Consider the price God has set on the glory of Heaven. After the commission of sin, He required nothing less than the Blood and death of His only Son ; so that by the death of a God, the life of grace has been given to man ; by the tribulations of a God, true consolations have been accorded to man ; and, because God has been fastened to the Cross between two thieves, man has been honored with a place among the choirs of Angels. How

excellent, then, must be this treasure, since to purchase it, God suffered a bloody sweat, was scourged, buffeted, covered with spits, and nailed to the Cross ! O God, so generous, so magnificent in Thy rewards, what wilt Thou give at such a cost ? Could we but fathom this abyss, we might comprehend more clearly the greatness of eternal glory.

And yet, besides this, God requires on the part of man, great sacrifices in order to attain Heaven. He commands him to take up his cross ; to pluck out his right eye should it scandalize him ; to have no concern for his father and mother, nor for anything in the world, be it what it may, if it conflict with the observance of His commandments. And when we have faithfully accomplished all that is ordained, and all that depends on us, He tells us that we must hope for this glory only as a pure favor, so much does its value surpass the merit of our works ! For this reason He says in St. John : “ I am the Beginning and the End of all things ; to him that thirsteth, I will give of the fountain of the water of life, free cost.”

How great must this recompense be, when God requires so high a price for it ; and yet, when we have given Him all we have, He tells us, that He gives it to us for nothing.

We may also form some idea of this glory from the situation and elevation of the place in which it is manifested : this is the empyreal Heaven : the

most capacious, the noblest creation. It is called in Scripture the land of the living; whence we are to infer that the land we now inhabit, is the land of the dying. If, nevertheless, in this land of the dying there are so many beautiful and precious things, what incomprehensible treasures must be found where men are to live eternally! Let us consider, then, that the place in which we dwell, is the land of the dying; the other, that of the living; the one is the abode of sinners, the other, of the just; the one is the habitation of men, the other, that of Angels; the one is a place for penitents, the other, for those who are justified; the one is a battlefield, the other, the city of triumph. In fine, the one includes both friends and enemies, and the other, only friends and the elect.

But, if the difference between the inhabitants of these two places is so great, what a difference there must be between the places themselves; for God has made them suitable to the quality of those for whom they are destined. Glorious things are said of thee, O City of God! Thou art boundless in thy extent, most stately in thy structure, most precious in the material of which thou art made; most noble by the dignity of thy inhabitants, most agreeable in thy delights, most rich in all treasures, exempt from all evil.

What we have hitherto said, regards the accidental glory of the Saints; but, there is another kind of glory, far transcending this; namely, their

essential glory. This consists in the vision and enjoyment of God, Himself. St. Augustine speaks of this glory when he says: That the reward of virtue is God, Himself, whom we shall love without satiety, whom we shall see for all eternity, and whom we shall praise without ever being weary. So that this recompense is the greatest we can conceive; it is not Heaven, nor earth, nor any created being, but God, Himself; who, although infinitely simple, yet contains within Himself all possible goods.

To comprehend this, we must know that one of the greatest mysteries of this divine substance, is, that while it is most simple, it comprises within itself, in an infinite degree, the perfections of all creatures; for God, having made them all and conducted them to their last end, has necessarily in Himself what He gives to others. Whence it follows, that all the blessed shall possess and behold all things in God; each one, however, in a degree proportioned to the glory he enjoys. For, as creatures now serve as a mirror in which we perceive some rays of God's beauty; so God, Himself, will then be the mirror wherein we shall see the beauty of creatures, but far more perfectly than if we saw them in themselves. Thus, God will be the universal happiness of the Saints, their perfect felicity, and the accomplishment of all their desires. He will there be a mirror to our eyes, music to our ears, sweetness even to our taste, and a most pleas-

ing perfume to our sense of smell. In Him, says St. Bernard, we shall find fulness of light for our understanding, abundance of peace for our will, and the plenitude of eternity for our memory.

If beauty charms you, the beauty of God eclipses that of the sun. If you seek after nobility, He is the source and origin of all that is noble. If you wish a long life, He is life everlasting. If you desire plenty, He is the fulness of all riches. If you love music and charming voices, the Angels are continually singing in His presence. If you pine for company and social intercourse, you will there have the company of all the Blessed who have but one heart and one soul. If you aspire to honors and wealth, you will find them in the House of God. Finally, if you wish to be freed from all afflictions, you will there be happily delivered from them.

To all these advantages must be added, the happiness of living in the company of the Angels, of enjoying the presence of these sublime Intelligences; of seeing these noble troops of Saints more resplendent than the stars of heaven: The Patriarchs will there shine in glory, for their obedience; the Prophets, for their hope; the Martyrs will be adorned with crowns dyed in their blood, and Virgins will be clothed in white robes, in token of their purity. But what tongue can worthily extol the Sovereign Monarch who resides in the midst of these glorious Saints! Were we every day to suffer

new torments ; nay, should we undergo, for a time, the pains of hell ; would we consider this too heavy a cost to purchase the happiness of contemplating the Lord in His glory, and enjoying the happy company of His elect ?

Happy, a thousand times happy, the eyes destined to behold the beauty of this magnificent City, the glory of these illustrious citizens, the splendor of these buildings, the riches of these palaces, and the common joy of this heavenly country ! What a happiness to behold the Orders of these blessed Spirits and the authority of this sacred Senate ; the majesty of these venerable Elders whom St. John saw seated on thrones in the presence of God ! What happiness to hear these Angelic voices, these exquisite singers and this harmonious music, not in four parts like that here below, but in as many parts and of as many different voices, as there are blessed souls in Heaven ! How delightful to hear that ravishing canticle which the same St. John once heard in a divine ecstasy : “ Benediction and glory, and wisdom, thanksgiving, honor, power, and strength to our God for ever and ever. *Amen !* ”

What a happiness to behold these beautiful fields, these fountains of life, and these pastures on the mountains of Israel ! What a glorious thing it will be to sit down at this divine banquet, to be numbered among so many illustrious guests ; to eat at the table of God, Himself ; that is, to share in His glory and felicity ! There, the blessed will be at

rest and have full enjoyment of eternal bliss ; there they will sing, praising God, and will find themselves at every moment, immersed in the most delightful pleasures. Now, if faith promises these great blessings as a reward of virtue ; who could be so blind as not to resolve to practise it, in the hope of so glorious a recompense ?

FIFTH DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book I. chapter I.

SECOND READING.

On the Imitation of our Lord, and on some Virtues not included in the Subjects of the Retreat.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

As there are some persons who, not content with doing all they believe necessary for their salvation, wish to go farther and perfect themselves in piety, by the practice of the most exalted virtues, it is but just to assist them.

I shall, therefore, propose as the first precept I have to give them, and as the object of the doctrine which I wish to engrave upon their hearts, these words of our Saviour: "I have given you the example, that you may do as I have done." For, as a competent writing-master, eager to perfect his pupils, places before them the most beautiful specimens of penmanship, that by imitating them they may form their hand; so, wishing to give you the form of a holy and Christian life, I deem it necessary to go to the original, and place before you Jesus Christ, Himself, the Master of all virtues; all that He said and

performed during His life, was not only a remedy for our ills, but also an example for us to imitate. It is well known, that effects are all the more perfect, as they approach nearer to the perfection of their causes, and more closely resemble them. As the perfection of a disciple consists in closely resembling his master, so all the perfection of the creature, is in the Imitation of his Creator, becoming, as far as possible, like unto Him. Although this perfect Imitation cannot be attained, we must aspire after it. The Holy Scripture invites us frequently to this Imitation: "Be ye holy," it says in one place, "as I am holy." And again: "Be merciful as your heavenly Father is merciful." And elsewhere: "Be ye perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."

Since, then, all the perfection of the creature consists in imitating his Creator; since we must first see what we intend to imitate; and, since no one can see God during this life, in His nature and glory; the Son of God was so exceedingly gracious, as to vouchsafe to clothe Himself with our flesh, that we might behold Him whom we are to imitate. He took the form of a servant, that we might see in what manner He conversed with men on earth; how He spoke, to what works He applied Himself; how He conducted Himself in the good or evil that befell Him; in solitude or in company; with His friends or with His enemies; with the high and with the lowly; and, in fine, that we might perceive

the excellence of His virtues: His charity, His humility, His patience, His obedience, His meekness, His fasting, His poverty, His zeal for souls; His love for His neighbor; His severity towards Himself, His tenderness and condescension towards others. This was one of the principal causes that brought Him into the world: God was pleased to become man, that man might become God; that he might learn to live as God, not only for having heard of God, but for having seen Him; not only through the force of God's word, but through the efficacy of His example. And this, a great Prophet several ages before, had declared, saying: "Thy eyes shall see thy Teacher, and thy ears shall hear the voice of one calling thee to the path which thou hadst forsaken: This is the way, walk in it, and go not aside, either to the right hand or to the left." By the manifestation of this great mystery, our ears have not only heard the doctrine of God, but our eyes have also seen His Person; that is, they have seen the Word made Flesh. Thus, the greater conformity you have with Jesus Christ in all His virtues, the more perfect you will be. This is what the Spirit of God, who resides in the just, intends to effect. A great Doctor has said, that no painter takes so much care to make a picture perfectly like to the original, as Almighty God does to render all His elect like to Jesus Christ Crucified; knowing it to be the greatest perfection and the highest glory that can be acquired in this life.

But you will, perhaps, say : How can I imitate the Son of God ? I am man, and He is God ; I am an abyss of misery, and He is an abyss of virtue ; how can I raise myself to the Imitation of so wonderful a purity ? Your doubt is reasonable ; and indeed, a frail and mortal man cannot of himself attain this resemblance ; but, by the power of God's Spirit dwelling within him, he may approach it. This Spirit was given to man in order to produce this admirable effect. By virtue of this divine Spirit man can lead a divine life, doing the works not of men, but of God, since he has the Spirit of God. It would not be impossible for a man to speak like Cicero, if he had the spirit of Cicero ; nor for another to reason like Aristotle, if he had the spirit of Aristotle. So, it is not impossible for a man to imitate the virtues of God, when he has received the Spirit of God. It is not rare to see things participate of the nature of those with which they are joined. Insipid food seasoned with salt, will become savory ; preserved with sugar, sweet ; and dressed with perfumes and spices, odoriferous : in like manner, a man becomes participant of the divine nature, if he is animated by the Holy Spirit. Our Lord explains both cases when He says : " That which is born of the flesh is flesh ; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." By this He plainly declared, that it was not possible for the flesh of itself to be anything but flesh ; but that it was not impossible for it to become

spirit, if it were assisted by the power and presence of the divine Spirit.

From the influence of this Spirit, as from a heavenly seed, the children of God are born; and, therefore, it is not astonishing if, as children, they resemble their Father, and lead a divine life, since they have received the divine Spirit, as St. Paul teaches in these words: "We, who have the honor of being Christians, having the veil taken from our face; and receiving into our souls, as in a glass, the brightness of God, are transformed into the image of God, through the operation of His Spirit." Nor need we be surprised that David, addressing the just, says to them: "I have said, ye are gods, and all of you are the sons of the Most High," since they participate in His Spirit and resemble Him.

Can any one be astonished that man should be raised to this dignity, since it is a grace bestowed by the Son of God who came down from Heaven to impart it to us. He vouchsafed to humble Himself so far as to become man, that man, who was corrupted, might become divine; not by nature, but by grace. Thus He would, in one respect, be the cause of all perfection by His example, since He represented in His own most holy life the image of a perfect life; and, in another, He would be the cause of all merit, since by the merit of His Incarnation and the sacrifice of the Cross, He acquired for all men so sublime a state.

Receive, then, and faithfully preserve in your heart, this first precept for the direction of your life. To this the Apostle, St. Peter, invites you, when he says: "Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we may follow His steps." St. John recommends the same by these words: "He that abideth in Jesus Christ ought even so, to walk as Jesus Christ hath walked."

But as this precept is general, it will be proper to treat of the virtues in particular, and to explain the use and practice of them.

Hope is a virtue which you should highly cherish, being the sister of Charity: by means of hope, you regard God as your Father, and have for Him the heart of a child; for, as there is no good on earth which, being compared to God, deserves to be called good; so there is no father in this world who has for his children such tenderness and charity, as our heavenly Father manifests for those whom He has vouchsafed to adopt as His children. Be convinced that whatever befalls you in this world, whether good or evil, prosperous or adverse, is for your good, since the smallest bird falls not into the net but by God's permission. Thus, in all the accidents of life, have recourse to Him with confidence; lay before Him your troubles, relying upon His liberality which is incalculable; on His promises which are faithful; on the benefits you have received from Him as so many pledges of His bounty; but rely, particularly, on the merits of His Son which He

has made over to us ; hope firmly that He will have compassion on you, though you are sinful and miserable ; believe that He will powerfully assist you by means unknown to you, and in the hour you least expect ; and that He will turn all things to your good. And, to render yourself worthy of His favors, have always in your mind, and often on your lips, these words of David : “ I am needy and poor, but the Lord is careful for me.”

The Psalms, the Prophecies, and the Gospels, encourage us continually to place our hope in this divine Providence. Exercise yourself, then, in this virtue, and you will see that your heart will find itself insensibly strengthened thereby, not only to suffer patiently, but even to expect your salvation from the afflictions and trials it may please God to send you. Be assured, that until you have acquired this confidence, you will never enjoy true peace or repose of mind ; without it, all things will afflict you and cast you into trouble and vexation ; but with it, nothing should disquiet you, since you have God on your side, and His promises cannot fail you.

I exhort you also, to the love of silence ; this is called the mother of innocence, the key of discretion, the safeguard of devotion, the faithful companion of chastity, and the ornament of youth. To exercise yourself properly therein, never permit any word to proceed from your mouth which may wound your neighbor. Never give ear to detractors ; but, on the contrary, employ all the prudence which

God will have given you, to break off such discourses. Let your speech be always free from flattery in speaking of others, and from vanity in speaking of yourself. Avoid all asperity in your language; endeavor, on the contrary, to make it as sweet and affable as possible; shun artifice; let your discourse be simple and sincere, as becomes true children of Jesus Christ. Never utter idle words, because God will demand of you an account of them in the day of judgment; but especially refrain from raillery, because it easily wounds others. But the two most dangerous rocks which you should fear, are: speaking well of yourself, and ill of your neighbor. To avoid these dangers, speak little. If you can be silent, without prejudice to charity or obedience, willingly hold your peace; let not your silence, however, be disedifying to any one; but, when you are obliged to speak, say only what is necessary or useful.

Learn also, to suffer, without murmur or complaint, the injuries, contempt, calumnies, and afflictions which God may permit; believing that these evils befall you through His ever just and ever merciful Providence; conceive no indignation or hatred against those from whom you receive them; but, on the contrary, after the example of your divine Master, be gentle and courteous towards them.

Be not troubled at the calamities happening in the world; but trust in God's Providence, without which

a bird falls not to the ground. If it sometimes happens that you feel no inward consolation, but only sadness, redouble the fervor of your prayers; have recourse to the Lord, without seeking after vain comforts to solace you, for He Himself will comfort you.

Do not imagine that holiness consists in receiving consolation and great sweetness; nor, that those tender sentiments that sometimes produce fountains of tears, are certain signs of solid virtue. True devotion is a prompt and generous will to accomplish all that is pleasing to God, and whatever regards His honor and service. It always produces salutary effects, notwithstanding the aridity the soul suffers. To be truly spiritual, therefore, desire not, with too much eagerness, these interior delights; but be equally ready to receive them, or to be deprived of them, as God may will. If he is pleased to comfort you, accept this favor with humble gratitude; but guard against using this gift solely for your satisfaction; do not rest so much upon the gift as to forget Him who bestows it; in fine, seek not the consolations of God, but the God of consolation.

Be not discouraged because you still perceive certain defects or passions, which, with all your industry, you cannot totally subdue; recommend yourself to the divine mercy, and without losing courage, bear this state humbly and patiently; persevere in good, and place yourself in the hands of God. If you fall seven times a day, rise as often, hoping that

He will pardon you ; and resolve frequently, to be more vigilant and attentive over yourself. Confide not, however, in your own strength, but in the goodness of God, and the assistance of His grace, which will never be wanting to those who serve Him faithfully. Let all the affections of your soul be so directed to God, that He may be to you All in all things ; and, in all things regard Him alone.

Place often before your eyes the image of Jesus Christ, God and Man, nailed to the Cross ; imprint it as deeply as you can on your heart. Reverence, with sincere devotion, His sacred wounds, which merit eternal homage ; hide yourself within them with holy confidence and humility. If you employ all your powers in representing to yourself the torments of your Saviour, every vain thought will be excluded. Remain, therefore, in habitual recollection ; entertain yourself with Him in sweet and loving conversations ; look steadfastly upon your God, who sees you at all times ; let your heart speak to Him ; sometimes let your voice express your love to Him ; and consider it the greatest of all losses to be separated, but for one moment, from this Sovereign Good in whom all other goods are contained.

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapters v. and vi.

FOURTH READING.

*Our principal Obligations towards God, towards
our Neighbor, and towards Ourselves.*

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

The Prophet Micheas comprises all virtues in these three points of justice, when he says: "I will show thee, O mortal man, what is good, and what the Lord requireth of thee: Do judgment, love mercy, and walk solicitous with thy God." The first, to judge equitably, regards ourselves in particular; the second, to love mercy, regards our neighbor; and the third, to be careful to please God, pertains to His worship, and the homage which is due to Him.

To commence by the strictest and most important of these obligations; you will remark that, among precious stones, there are some, by their species, much more estimable than others, as rubies, diamonds, and emeralds; so, among the virtues, there are some which, by their nature, incomparably excel the rest. These regard God, and for this reason, they are called theological; to these we may also add the virtue of Religion, by which we render to the divine Majesty, the honor due to Him and to

whatever concerns His worship. These virtues are the first and the most essential ; and it may be said that, not only are they the first and most important, but they excite the other virtues and give them life and activity. They are, in regard to the other virtues, what the heavens are in regard to inferior creatures that depend on their influence. If you aspire to perfection, endeavor to acquire all virtues, if possible ; for, in order that a lute may give forth an agreeable harmony, all the strings must perfectly accord, and each one perform its duty ; in like manner, all the virtues contribute and harmonize to form the life of a perfect Christian. But, it is necessary to cultivate, in a particular degree, those virtues of which we now speak, and to advance therein, because they are the term of perfection ; and you will be all the more perfect, in proportion to the greater progress you make in them. We cannot but admire the example of these virtues in many of the holy patriarchs, as David, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob : although they were rich and married, and although their condition, and the consideration of their families and estates engaged them in many cares and temporal concerns ; yet they ceased not to be great Saints, because they possessed these exalted virtues in perfection ; as we see in the faith and obedience of Abraham ; in the piety, devotion, and submission of David ; and in the confidence which this great king had in God, seeking no other assistance, no other refuge in his

troubles ; trusting only in God, as a dutiful son confides in a good father ; for he says himself : “ My father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord hath taken me under His protection.”

The most effectual means to acquire these excellent virtues, is, to believe firmly that God is truly your Father, and more than a Father, since no fatherly heart is equal to His ; no love of a father or of a mother can be compared to the love God has for you ; for He it is, who created you, and holds in reserve for you the most precious of all treasures. Being well convinced of this truth, always look on God with the eyes of an affectionate child ; that is, with a loving heart,—a tender, humble, and respectful heart ; an obedient heart, entirely submissive to His will ; in fine, with a heart full of confidence, seeking protection only under the wings of His Providence. You should then regard Almighty God with these eyes, with this heart, whenever you think of Him ; and you are obliged to think of Him as often as you can, both during the day and night ; that, with the assistance of His grace, you may gradually form in yourself a heart disposed like that of the Prophet, who said : “ Thy name, O Lord, and Thy remembrance are the only desire of my heart. My soul hath sighed for Thee during the night, and with my spirit within me, in the morning early, I will watch to Thee.”

Sentiments of this nature towards God, could not be expressed by human language, nor be acquired

by our own strength.. He alone understands them who has experienced them ; and he alone has experienced them, who has been favored by them. Wherefore, let us incessantly implore this precious grace of our Lord. We may, indeed, hope to receive a favorable answer to our petition, considering these words of our divine Saviour : “ If you, then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the good spirit to those who ask it.” The Apostle speaks of this spirit when he says : “ We have not received the spirit of servitude in fear, but the spirit of adoption of the sons of God, by which we cry : Abba, Father.” This is the heart which God promises you by the mouth of the Prophet Ezechias : “ I will give you a new heart and a new spirit within you ; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh ; and I will put my spirit in the midst of you, and will cause you to walk in my commandments, and keep my judgments, and do them.” This is the spirit of filial love which all the prophets have so often promised you, through the merits of the only Son of God ; and, in truth, it was abundantly imparted on the day of Pentecost.

Now, to descend to particulars, we may say with St. Vincent de Lerins, that man should have towards God the following dispositions : a most ardent love, great fear, profound respect, constant zeal, affectionate gratitude, prompt obedience, interior joy

which leads him to seek God, and to find nothing sweet or agreeable but Himself. To obtain these holy dispositions, pray without intermission, saying to our Lord : O good Jesus, grant that I may love Thee ardently and with all the powers of my soul ; that I may honor Thee and lovingly fear Thee ; that I may be zealous for the glory of Thy holy name, and so labor to procure it, that the least insult offered to Thee may afflict and rend my heart ; may I be grateful for Thy favors, and give Thee thanks for them with deep humility ; let me continually praise Thee, spending day and night in this exercise ; and, with the Prophet, may I say to Thee with a sincere heart : “ I will bless the Lord at all times ; His praise shall be ever in my mouth.” Grant me also this grace : that being perfectly obedient, I may taste how sweet Thou art ; that I may continually increase more and more in Thy love, and faithfully observe Thy commandments.

The virtues of which we have spoken, refer directly to Almighty God. As to the duties which regard ourselves, St. Vincent de Lerins calls our attention to seven principal points. He wishes, 1 : that a Christian should be always full of confusion for his sins ; 2 : that he should be sorry for them and bewail them all his life, because they have offended God and defiled his soul ; 3 : that in quality of a sinner, he should desire to be despised, forgotten, and abandoned by all the world, believing himself unworthy of being noticed by men, or of

receiving the smallest favor from them ; 4 : that he should consider his body as the source of all his sins, and mortify it with all the rigor it deserves ; 5 : that he conceive an irreconcilable hatred against his vicious inclinations, and labor incessantly, not only to cut off the branches, but to pluck up the very roots ; 6 : that with extraordinary diligence and exact fidelity, he endeavor to regulate all his actions, words, and affections, so that he may not, in anything, wound justice or charity ; 7 : that modesty and prudence appear in all his conduct, so that there be nothing superfluous or defective therein.

This great Saint also adds seven other dispositions no less necessary than the former, and which regard our neighbor : 1 : To have true compassion for the sufferings of others, and feel them as if they were our own ; 2 : to rejoice sincerely at their prosperity, as we would do in our own case ; 3 : to bear patiently the injuries offered to us, and accord a hearty forgiveness for them ; 4 : to treat every one with great charity and meekness ; 5 : to show respect towards our equals, regarding them as better than ourselves ; submitting to them as if, indeed, they were our superiors ; 6 : to maintain perfect peace and union with all men, so that, as far as is consistent with the good pleasure of God, we may have but one and the same sentiment, one and the same will ; 7 : to be in a sincere disposition, after the example of Jesus Christ, to sacrifice ourselves for all men ; that is, to be prepared to expose our lives for the salvation of souls ;

to labor continually that all may be one in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ in them.

But, because the virtue of charity and compassion towards our neighbor is the root and foundation of all these virtues, you should hold it in the highest esteem if you desire to please God, since no other is so frequently and earnestly recommended in Scripture as this. The Prophet Zachary relates that the Jews having asked of God whether, in order to please Him and fulfil His law, they should fast on certain days in the year; God, to give them to understand what works were most pleasing to Him, replied: "Thus saith the Lord of Hosts: Judge ye true judgment, and show ye mercy and compassion, every man to his brother; and oppress not the widow and the fatherless, and the stranger and the poor; and let not a man devise evil in his heart against his brother." The Prophet Isaias speaks in a manner even more touching: "To refresh and console the weary is my joy and repose." Could God more exalt works of mercy than by putting Himself in the place of the poor, and receiving as for Himself, the refreshment and assistance given to the needy? Do we not observe that our Saviour has comprised the whole law and the prophets in the sole precept of the love of God and of our neighbor? In fine, Jesus Christ being on the point of leaving this world, recommended nothing so expressly to His disciples in the beautiful sermon He gave them after the Last Supper, as to preserve charity and to

love their brethren. "This is my commandment," says He, "that you love one another as I have loved you." And again: "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one for another." Not satisfied with giving them this last commandment, He addresses Himself to His Father, conjuring Him to imprint this precept on their minds: "Holy Father, I pray that they may be one, as Thou, Father, in me, and I in Thee; that the world may know that Thou hast sent me." Thus, our Saviour desired that the love of Christians for one another should be so perfect, that it would suffice to convince men of the divinity of a religion capable of inspiring such virtue. These considerations show us what our charity and compassion should be in regard to our neighbor, and our obligation to assist him in his necessities.

In order to reduce to practice these recommendations, it becomes necessary to watch continually over yourself with fear and trembling; and to dread nothing so much as being unfaithful to God in the good resolutions you have adopted for the regulation of your life. This holy vigilance will serve as a spur to keep you from falling asleep in the path of virtue; nor should you, even in the midst of your occupations, fail to observe it; for this salutary fear and this exactitude in avoiding all that might displease God, is, according to the Prophet, the third part of justice.

These are the principal virtues which embellish the Christian life; this is the image of which we spoke,—renewed, and reformed upon the model of Jesus Christ; for the life of a Christian should be so perfect, as to be a pattern of holiness, a silent sermon, a shining light, a convincing proof of the true faith, and a mirror in which God's glory may be more clearly manifested than in all other creatures.

SIXTH DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book III. chapter XIII.

SECOND READING.

Charity,—its Excellence and Fruits.

(From the Writings of Father Granada).

St. Prosper says, that Charity is the end of the commandments, the death of vices, the life of virtues, the strength of those who combat, the crown of those who triumph; the buckler of holy souls, the cause of all merit, and the necessary condition of pleasing God. It abounds in fruits of grace for those who commence; is full of joy for those who advance; and a treasure of grace for those who persevere; it is the faithful companion of the victories of the Martyrs, the succor and vigor of the faithful in all their labors. By these words this Father endeavors to explain what Charity is, and to make us comprehend something of its Excellence and its Fruits.

But, what still more recommends it, is, that it is the greatest of virtues; it includes them all, and it is their end. We have an evident proof of this in the dignity which the Seraphim possess in heaven. Charity reigns and shines in them more perfectly

than in all the other choirs of Angels; and they hold the first rank among the blessed Spirits, because they surpass them all in this virtue. And St. Gregory teaches us, that all those who in this life are inflamed with the love of God, belong in a measure, to this supreme hierarchy. Hear his words: "There are," says he, "some persons whose hearts, inflamed by the contemplation of divine things, burn with the single desire of their Creator, seeking nothing of this world; they are nourished only with the love of eternity, despising all earthly goods; by the strength of their spirit, they rise above all that is perishable, and find their repose and riches in this love. . . . Burning with love themselves, they warm others when they speak, and by their words, excite the same ardor in them with which they are animated. How, then, shall I name these holy souls, if not Seraphim; since their hearts, converted into fire, enlighten and inflame at the same time."

Another advantage of Charity, according to St. Augustine, is, that God even calls Himself, Charity; showing us that nothing so closely resembles the Deity as this rare virtue. And, in truth, as God is all things, Charity, in some measure, is all things; since it is useful to all, giving life and perfection to all. Charity, in the first place, makes men holy, since, according to St. Bernard, Charity is the rule and measure of perfection; so that, we advance in holiness in proportion to our love of God. Charity renders men wise, according to the words of David:

“The commandment of the Lord is luminous ; it enlightens the eyes of the soul.” This made St. Augustine say : “Whoever desires to know God, and to please Him at the same time, let him love Him, and then he will know Him.” Charity makes true Prelates, and inspires them with sentiments conformable to their dignity. For this reason our Lord, wishing to raise St. Peter to the exalted rank of Head of His Church, desired of him this sole virtue, when He asked three times, if this Apostle loved Him more than the others. Charity makes Martyrs, since all those who have acquired this glorious title by their sufferings, have drawn their strength from this virtue ; for, St. Augustine says, there is nothing so strong or so powerful as love. Charity produces Virgins, since, as St. John Climachus tells us, he is chaste who surmounts love by another love, and who, by the fire of divine love, destroys the sinful concupiscence of the flesh. Charity gives men glorious victory over all temptations ; and, upon this subject, St. Peter of Ravenna utters these beautiful words : “My Brethren, love God, and love Him with all your heart ; that by this means you may, without difficulty, overcome all the assaults of the enemy ; it is a very gentle war, a most agreeable combat, to triumph over all vices with the sweetness of love.” In fine, Charity is the perfection and accomplishment of the Law and the Prophets, as the Apostle teaches, when he says : “Love is the end and the fulfilling of the

Law ;” in a word, all that can be said, is included in this term :—Charity.

The love of God appears like to God, Himself, in its properties, and in the privileges which attend it, and by which it enters into some conformity with the divine attributes ; for, to borrow the words of a holy Doctor : Love is noble and generous ; it is beautiful and wise ; it accomplishes great things ; it is sweet, strong, and produces many fruits ; it is simple, chaste, invincible, and ever gains the ascendancy. Love is always cheerful, attractive, agreeable, and admirable. Love penetrates and subdues all that is opposed to it ; it elevates and abases ; it is high and profound ; it surmounts the greatest difficulties ; it gives death and vivifies ; it cannot hide itself, it can be repaid only by love ; it gives all for love, because it wishes and craves nothing but love. The heart of him who loves perfectly, thinks always of love, and his tongue speaks only of love. Love enlightens the understanding, inflames the will, ravishes the senses, sanctifies the soul, and transforms the whole man into God.

It is then but just, that we employ every means to acquire this virtue, since it attracts so many others in its train. We read that our Lord, among other lessons of piety, taught the following to a certain Saint : When you recite the *Pater*, stop at this petition : “ Thy will be done,” and endeavor to conform your will to that of God in whatever may befall you. When you say the *Ave, Maria*, pause at the name

of Jesus, that it may be imprinted on your heart to serve as your defense, your guide, and your consolation in all the trials of life. When you read the Scripture, dwell upon this single word : "Love," by means of which you will always walk in the right path, will always be pure, courageous, and diligent ; for, it is the nature of love to execute all things without difficulty, fear, or weariness ; making even martyrdom sweet and agreeable. It cannot be conceived what a single spark of true love can effect, nor the wonderful fruits it produces. To conclude : this fire will consume all your evil inclinations, all disorderly affections and desires for the things of this life.

But, besides all these goods and advantages which accompany this virtue, I think I should add, in order to urge men to desire and seek it, that in it, consists not only the perfection of the Christian life, but also the greater portion of the joy and happiness which the heart of a creature can taste while upon earth ; for, as says Boetius, all men tend to one single object ; that is, to be contented and happy ; and, as their felicity proceeds from a good which includes all other goods ; the will, finding in this good, all satisfaction of its desires, seeks for nothing more, since it possesses all it craves. This good, so general and so perfect, can be no other than God, Himself ; hence, no perfect repose can be found out of Him ; and with Him, we cannot fail to enjoy it. True, we shall find it in its plenitude only in the

other life, where we shall possess God entirely ; but we shall enjoy it, though less perfectly, in this life, by the light and influence of grace. St. Bernard reveals what he experienced in himself, in his *Treatise of the Love of God* ; he says : “ Being in a retired place, like a solitary bird which makes its nest in a lonely desert separated from the rest of the world, and beginning to feel the sweet breath of love, I opened my mouth, my divine Saviour, and I drew in Thy spirit ; and sometimes, with my eyes half closed, and sighing for Thee, Thou didst instil into the mouth of my heart something which I can scarcely comprehend or express. However, I feel the sweetness and tenderness of it, which so consoles me, that if Thou didst fill me with it, I should have nothing more to desire.” These are the words St. Bernard uses to explain his transport. The Spouse in the Canticles expresses the same sentiment, when she says : “ I sleep, but my heart watches.” For, when we sleep, our senses remain suspended and in repose ; in like manner, God sometimes communicates Himself to our souls with such sweetness and love, that He seems to immerse us in a river of peace ; rendering us so happy, delighted, and completely satiated, that we are, as in a profound sleep, with regard to all desires and thoughts of this life ; about which we are no more concerned than if we were actually asleep.

The Holy Spirit not only compares this state to sleep, but, in another place of the same Canticle,

He styles it death, saying : " Love is as strong as death." And a Saint, explaining these words, teaches us, that the love of God in its perfection, is so strong, that it ravishes by its charms, all the powers of the soul, rendering them dead to all the pleasures of earth.

The joy and sweetness which accompany Charity are so great, that they forcibly, but sweetly, take possession of all the faculties of the soul ; entirely withdraw it from the love of terrestrial things, and wholly transport us in God. This love also wounds, because it strikes the heart in such a manner that, as he who has received a violent blow, cannot help thinking of the pain caused thereby ; so he who happily finds himself wounded by this love, cannot but with difficulty, distract his thoughts from that which he loves. This made the Abbot Sylvanus say, that when he came from prayer, all things appeared to him so vile and base, that he shut his eyes that he might not see them, and said to himself : Be closed, my eyes, do not look at anything of this world, for nothing in it merits your notice.

But, if you desire a still more striking example to convince you of this truth, listen to what St. Jerome relates of his exercises, and of the attractions and delights with which God nourished his soul in a desert, as he calls it, parched by the rays of the sun : " If I discovered anywhere a deep valley, or a craggy rock, that was the place of my

prayer. There—the same Lord is my witness—after shedding many tears, after looking a long time to heaven, I seemed to be amidst the choirs of Angels; and in the joy of my heart, I sang: “After Thee, O Lord, we will run in the odor of celestial perfumes.” He relates these things to the chaste Eustochium; and, writing to other virgins consecrated to God, he says: “Believe an old man who speaks from experience, my Daughters: If once you had tasted how sweet is the Lord, you would be powerfully persuaded of the truth of His word, when He says: Come to me and I will show you all riches. In truth, He will communicate secrets to you of which no one can speak but such as have experienced them. I know what I say, my dear Daughters, and I declare to you candidly that, notwithstanding my misery and unworthiness, I often found myself in the company of Angels, partaking for several days of this sweet and heavenly nourishment. After which, returning to myself, and having learned many things of the future, I would weep, to be forced to relinquish so soon this delightful pleasure. But, of the happiness which I enjoyed at this time, and the ineffable sweetness in which my soul was plunged, I attest, that these graces and transports were such, that the weakness of my language is unable to express them.” He then adds: “A heart filled with earthly things cannot relish the sweetness of this contemplation. It must be dead to the world, that it may live to God alone,

and have no care but to approach Him by holy thoughts and fervent desires. For, as the Lord says Himself: "If the grain of wheat falling into the earth, die not, itself remaineth alone; but if it corrupt and die, it yieldeth much fruit."

I could also cite the example of St. Thomas of Aquin. This holy man was often so absorbed in God, that his body, carried away by his spirit, was sometimes raised from the ground; at other times, was without feeling; so, that once being surprised in one of these ecstasies, as he was holding in his hand a lighted candle, it was consumed between his fingers, without his being sensible of it; the accident was discovered only by the marks of the burn. Another time, it was deemed necessary to cauterize him; placing himself in prayer, he was immediately so absorbed in God, that he did not feel the pain of the operation.

After this, consider, if it is not just to esteem this treasure and to give all we possess, to acquire this precious pearl. If men do and suffer so much for the perishable goods of this life, which rather excite thirst in the soul than satisfy it, what should you not be willing to do for the acquisition of a good which so effectually stifles in you, the desire of any other good? "They call that man rich and happy," says St. Augustine, "whose coffers are filled with money; but should he not be considered so, who has God in his heart?"

Behold, then, a most powerful motive, among many others, which should make us sigh continually for this blessed moment in which we may acquire this rich treasure. As God alone can satisfy the desires of the soul, every one should feel obliged to tend with all his strength, to the perfection of the spiritual life; that he may become intimately united to this Sovereign Good, and render himself participant thereof.

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapter VII.

FOURTH READING.

Means of Acquiring the Love of God.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

After having shown that the end of a Christian life is the Love of God, we must now point out the means by which we may attain this Love; or rather, in what manner God is accustomed to impart it to souls; that you may know what preparations you should make to receive this divine favor, and coöperate with the good inspirations that God may give you.

First, we must admit, that no human effort is sufficient, of itself, to acquire this virtue; it is a gift and a pure grace of God, the most considerable

and important of all His gifts. This is why the Apostle says: "The charity of God has been shed in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." Therefore, it is the Holy Spirit, who is the essential Love of the divine Persons, who descends into the soul of the just man, creating and infusing therein that celestial habit which entices and urges him to love God.

You will remark, then, that the most ordinary means which God employs to increase and perfect this virtue in His elect, is, to give them, first, a new relish, a true knowledge of the nobility, sweetness, and beauty of His Love; in order to enkindle in the soul a great desire to experience something of it, and to spare no pains to possess it. God acts, in this case, like a merchant—if we may use the comparison—who, wishing to sell a most excellent wine, first gives a taste of it to him who desires to buy; that, being convinced of its excellence, he will make no difficulty in giving the price demanded. The Scripture represents the same to us, in figure, in the marriage of Jacob and Rachel. This Patriarch considered first, the beauty of the maid; from this arose the desire to espouse her; and his affection made him say to Laban, the father of Rachel: "I will serve you seven years if you give me your daughter;" and this long time appeared to him but a small matter, on account of the great love he had for her. What do these figures signify, if not what we see clearly expressed in the Canticles in these

words : “ When a man will have given all that he possesses in order to acquire Charity, he will esteem as nothing all that he has given.” Listen to what I am about to say : This delicate wine and this beautiful Rachel signify the same thing ; for the wine represents Charity, and Rachel is the figure of divine contemplation which conducts to Charity. This is the wine which was furnished by Jesus Christ at the marriage of Cana,—the wine to which the Spouse invites us when she says : “ Drink, my friends, and be inebriated, my well-beloved.” In a word, this is the wine of which David speaks, when he says : “ Oh ! how excellent is the cup with which I am inebriated ! ”

The first thing which Jesus Christ operates in His chosen souls, when He wishes to increase this virtue in them, is, to make them experience the sweetness of this wine ; this He does by giving them a knowledge which has nothing human in it, but is all divine. Thus, He makes them taste the beauty of this virtue, teaching them at the same time, that it is the root of all virtues and the death of all vices ; that it elevates men above the heavens, unites them to God, and renders them participants of heavenly delights ; so that, being sustained by the sweetness of celestial graces, attracted by the taste of that nourishment, and knowing the value of this inestimable pearl, they may make every effort to secure it. God gives the first taste of this gift without cost ; but He afterwards requires you to

purchase it with great care and labor. Thus we read, that Jacob first received the chaste Rachel for a spouse, but afterwards served seven years for love of her; the merchant, also, in the beginning, gives his wine for nothing, that it may be tasted, but afterwards sells it for its just value.

When we have learned the excellence of Charity, there arises in the soul a vehement desire to possess this sublime virtue; which desire is, doubtless, a particular gift of God, as well as the knowledge which is the cause of it. But, to explain how great this desire is in some souls, I must acknowledge that comparisons fail. The desire of the miser for gold, that of the ambitious man for honors, is very great, since they willingly expose themselves to winds and tempests, and traverse the globe to acquire them; but this desire is weak, compared to that of which we make mention; for, proceeding from a more noble principle, and tending to a higher end, it is, without comparison, stronger and more ardent than all other desires. This is the desire with which the Wise Man was burning when he spoke thus of this virtue: "I have loved her, and sought her from my youth; I have desired her for my spouse, for my soul was always ravished with her beauty." Every man, truly inflamed with the desire of this celestial spouse, which is divine wisdom and Charity, can think of nothing else; there is nothing he esteems so much; nothing he so ardently desires, or asks for with more

earnestness ; and he is ready to undertake any hardship to gain possession of it.

This is the condition of a soul inflamed with divine Love ; it runs, wounded with love, as a hind carrying in its side the arrow that pierced it ; for it has received the first fruits and pledges of the Holy Spirit, and has tasted a few drops of the sweetness of God's grace ; it cannot rest, it finds no repose until it reaches the fountain of living water, the delights of which it has already experienced, in some degree. Thus, the Lord commands us to seek until we find : "Ask, and you shall receive ; seek, and you shall find ; knock, and it shall be opened to you." And Eusebius of Emessa explaining these words, adds : "Ask, by prayer ; seek, by labor and diligence ; knock, by the strength of good desires." For, in truth, our desires for heavenly goods must be great, that there may be some proportion between what we ask for, and what we hope to attain ; our desires should be great, since their recompense is so excellent.

This ardent desire is the source of all virtues, and the means of acquiring divine Love. For those who seek God in all the sincerity of their heart, cease not to sigh after Him, and to moan as the dove. They become so absorbed in this holy thought, that whether they eat, or drink, or walk, or whatever else they do, they incessantly fill heaven and earth with their cries ;—addressing all the Saints from whom they expect succor, and in particular, imploring the power of the Blessed Virgin.

If you wish to place yourself in a suitable disposition to obtain the Love of God, imitate the poor who solicit alms. This is the means the holy King David employed: sometimes he styles himself an orphan, sometimes a sick man; again, a poor beggar. In these sincere and humble sentiments, address yourself to God, conjuring Him to grant you this favor. It is not enough for you to ask this with the perseverance and earnestness of the poor in seeking alms, you should imitate them in the means they adopt to excite the compassion of those who pass by: they display their tattered garments, their infirmities, their wounds; they endure hunger, cold, heat, all the inclemency of the seasons, for the sake of a little food;—awaiting all day the trifling alms which, indeed, is often refused them. If they do all this for a morsel of bread, what should you not do to procure the bread of Angels, the true nourishment and support of the soul? See, also, what care the poor take to select the most suitable places to make their demands, as churches and localities where the most charitable persons are likely to be found; admire also their patience in remaining there so long a time, in order to obtain a little assistance. And you, begging from the Lord, should seek a place of silence and retirement as the most suitable for prayer, and there solicit the spiritual alms you desire. Then, apply to the Saints, who are as the houses of the rich and charitable, and implore their assistance. In fine, as these poor people spend the entire day in going

from door to door, begging, and lose no occasion of making some little profit; in like manner, employ your mind and all your powers, that your whole life may be a continual prayer; profit by every occasion, to persevere in this holy search, and to raise your heart to God.

They who wish to arrive at holy Love by means of earnest prayer, ought to know that, to pray with all the devotion and attention which this holy exercise demands, they must withdraw from all unnecessary affairs, and curb their senses, particularly the sight and hearing. For this end, you should labor strenuously to preserve holy solitude of mind and heart; banishing all useless cares, and restraining curiosity of the mind, that you may more easily elevate your heart to God and consecrate it to His service.

It is well known that resemblance engenders love; and that what pleases God the most, and renders man most like His divine Son, is to bear labors, persecutions, injuries, and poverty for His Love. A soul truly imbued with the Love of God and who meditates on the Passion of Jesus Christ, sometimes experiences a thirst for sufferings far more intense, than the desire of worldly men for riches and ease. We read of St. Francis, that he had so excessive a love for poverty, that no miser had the like for riches. St. Dominic burned so ardently with the desire of martyrdom, that the thirsty stag is not more eager to reach the fountains

of water to refresh itself; and, as if one kind of martyrdom were not sufficient to satisfy his desire, he wished to have a special one for each of his members, that he might be the more conformed to Jesus Christ. It is said that the crocodile, a most cruel animal, flies when attacked; but pursues its enemy fleeing before it; thus it is with the pains and troubles of this life. They fly, so to speak, and cease to be troubles to those who seek them, and accept them for the Love of God; but they follow and generally torment those who have a horror of them; for pain does not consist so much in the actual burden, as in the repugnance of the will.

Consider the true servant of God animated by this same spirit; he despises and tramples under foot all that the world esteems and adores: honors, pleasures, riches; he desires to be the sport of the world for Jesus Christ; he has no repose until God makes him feel something of the Passion of our Lord; and he does not deem his love pure, until he has passed through the fire of tribulation.

For this reason, those who are seriously determined to serve God with their whole heart, resolve to renounce the world, at least, in spirit and heart. They do not wish to adore false gods, nor do they expect succor from them; moreover, seeing that this life is subject to so many miseries and necessities, they place all their hope in Him for whose love they have quitted all things; and they are fully

convinced that He is so good and faithful, that He, alone, will suffice for all their needs. Hence, they do not consider themselves abandoned ; on the contrary, they remain in an assurance so much the stronger, as they lean on the power and goodness of God. With this support, they esteem themselves rich in the midst of poverty ; are content in their necessities, firm and constant in dangers ; in the midst of contradictions they are in peace, saying with the great Apostle : I know the strength of Him in whom I put my trust, and that He is powerful enough to keep the deposit I place in His hands. Amidst the trials and difficulties of life, they raise their eyes to the mountains whence they expect succor ; knowing that He who guards Israel, slumbers not, and that He never forgets His own ; hence, they sleep in peaceful confidence because they have a Guardian who watches for them.

Being thus fortified by hope, they preserve peace of heart, which is the best disposition to arrive at divine union ; for, confiding in God through all the trials which arise, and believing firmly that He will preserve them from danger, they have no cause to be troubled or afflicted. They are truly happy.

SEVENTH DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book III. chapter LIX.

SECOND READING.

The particular Care Divine Providence takes of the Good.

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

Of all divine favors, the greatest, certainly, is the Care which God takes of those who serve Him. From this, as from their source, flow all other privileges. For, although Providence extends to all creatures in general, yet, it is far more careful of those received into the number of His special children, and to whom He has given a filial heart and mind. And He, on His side, has for them the heart of a Father; and His love is the measure of the Care He bestows upon them.

Yet, no man can understand the extent of this Providence, unless he has experienced it, or read the Holy Scripture with great attention, and observed therein those passages that treat of this matter. He, then, who will have given the necessary attention to this reading, will see that almost the whole Bible, from beginning to end, turns on these two funda-

mental points:—to ask, and to promise,—as the world turns on its poles; so that, when God, on the one hand, requires of man to obey His commandments, He promises, on the other, a great reward for observing them; whereas, He threatens to punish severely, those who break them.

But, considering the liberality of God and the destitution of man; the promises of God and the inability of man to make any return; there must needs be a great difference between what God asks and what He gives. He demands of us love and obedience which are His gifts to us; and yet, in return for that little, which we hold purely of His liberality, He offers us inestimable riches for this life as well as for the next. Among these goods, the chief is, the Fatherly love and Providence extended to those whom He has received into the number of His children. This love infinitely surpasses all the tenderness and affection which the most devoted father in the world could have for his children. There never was a father who amassed such riches for his children as God promises to His; these riches are no less than a participation of His glory. No father has undergone such hardship for his children as God, who has shed His Blood for us; nor has any father ever taken so much care of his children as God does, since He has them always in His sight, and assists them in all their necessities.

But, since this divine Providence is the greatest treasure of a Christian; and since the greater his

assurance of this Providence, the greater will be his confidence and joy, it will be well to quote here some passages of Scripture in proof of the same ; each text will be an authentic assurance of these immense riches which God, by His testament, has bequeathed to us. In Ecclesiasticus, it is said : "The eyes of the Lord are upon them that fear Him ; He is their powerful protector and strong stay ; a defense from the heat, and a cover from the sun at noon. A preservation from stumbling, and a help from falling ; He raiseth up the soul, and enlighteneth the eyes, and giveth health, and life, and blessing." From this we see, how numerous are the offices which the God of all majesty renders to His children.

The Prophet David says in his Psalms : " With the Lord shall the steps of the just be directed, and He shall regulate his ways. When he shall fall, he shall not be bruised, for the Lord putteth His hand under him to shield him." What harm can happen to him who falls so softly, and is supported by the hand of God ? He says again, in another place : " Many are the afflictions of the just, but out of them all, will the Lord deliver them. The Lord keepeth all their bones, not one of them shall be broken." This Providence is still more magnified in the Gospel ; for our Saviour, Himself, there tells us that not only does He take care of their bones, but of their very hairs, that not one of them be lost ; thus, to express in how extraordinary a

manner He protects the just ; for what will not God look after, since He is mindful of the very hairs of our head ? If this surprises us, how great will be our astonishment to hear what the Prophet, Zachary, tells us : “ Whoever,” says he, “ shall touch you, will touch the apple of my eye.” It were much had He said : “ Whosoever shall touch you, will touch me,” but : “ Whosoever shall touch you, will touch the apple of my eye,” is far stronger.

Nor does God only look after us Himself, but He has committed us to the care of His Angels ; therefore, David says ; “ He hath given His Angels charge over thee : to keep thee in all thy ways. In their hands shall they bear thee up : lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.” Thus, our good Angels, like elder brothers, carry the just in their arms ; for, not knowing how to walk by themselves, they require the help of others. Nor are the Angels content to serve them thus in this life only, but also at their death ; as appears by the poor man in the Gospel, who, after his death, was carried by Angels into Abraham’s bosom. In another Psalm, David says again : “ The Angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and shall deliver them.”

As this divine Providence produces so many different and wonderful effects, God has therefore, a great many different names given Him in the Holy Scripture ; but the most usual and the most remarkable is that of Father ; and it is thus that His beloved Son styles Him in the Gospel. But it is

not only in the Gospel that he takes this name, it is given to Him in several places of the Old Testament. David says: "As a father hath compassion on his children, so hath the Lord compassion on them that fear Him, for He knoweth our frailty." Another Prophet, not content to call God, Father, because His love and care are infinitely greater than that of all fathers, speaks in these terms: "Thou, O Lord, art our *only* Father; Abraham hath not known us, and Israel hath been ignorant of us." This gives us to understand, that these being but carnal fathers, deserved not the name, in comparison with God.

But, because a mother's affection is, generally speaking, more tender than a father's, God is pleased to term Himself a mother, and more than a mother. Hence, He says by the Prophet, Isaias: "Can a woman forget her infant, so as not to have pity on the son of her womb? and if she should forget, yet will I not forget thee." Can anything be more tender than this? Who would not then rejoice after this, in having such pledges of love as these? He who gives them to us is God, the infallible Truth, whose riches are infinite, whose power is boundless. Why should we not hope? Why should we not give ourselves up to joy and gladness?

But such is the excess of God's mercy, that He is not content to compare His affection to that of ordinary mothers. The love of the eagle is the most remarkable, and with this, God compares His

tenderness for us, when He says : “ The Lord loves His children as the eagle loves her little ones ; He spreads His wings over them, and carries them upon His shoulders.” And, elsewhere, the same Prophet thus expresses himself : “ The Lord carried you all the way you went, as a father carries his little son in his arms, until you arrived at the place He promised you.” As God does not disdain to take the title of Father, He also does us the honor to give us that of children. A proof of this is found in Jeremias : “ Ephraim is an honorable son to me and a child most dear to me ; since I have spoken of him, I will always remember him ; therefore, are my bowels troubled for him ; pitying, I will pity him.” Every word here should be weighed with attention, being the words of God ; and should elicit from our heart a sincere affection for Him, since His love for us is so tender.

On account of this same Providence, after calling Himself a Father, God takes also the title of Shepherd, as we read in the Gospel : “ I am the Good Shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me.” How, O Lord, dost Thou know Thy sheep ? With what eyes dost Thou regard them ? With the very eyes with which my Father looks on me, and I on Him, with the same eyes do I behold my sheep ; and they regard me in the same manner. O blessed Care ! O sovereign Providence ! What greater happiness can a man enjoy, than to be regarded by the Son of God, with the same eyes as those

by which the Father looks on Him? For, although the comparison does not hold in all respects, since a true son must always be much more beloved than one who is only adopted; yet, it is a very high honor to be in any manner compared with Him.

But God shows us, in a more touching manner, the wonderful effects of His Providence, when He says by the Prophet, Ezechial: "Behold I, myself, will seek my sheep, and will visit them. As the shepherd visiteth his flock in the day, when he shall be in the midst of his sheep that were scattered; so will I visit my sheep, and will deliver them out of the places where they have been scattered in the cloudy and dark day. And I will bring them out from the peoples, and will gather them out of the countries, and will bring them to their own land; and I will feed them in the mountains of Israel, by the rivers, and in all the habitations of the land; I will feed them in the most fruitful pastures, and their pastures shall be in the high mountains of Israel. I will feed my sheep, and will make them lie down, saith the Lord. I will seek that which was lost: and that which was driven away, I will bring back again; and I will bind up that which was broken." What greater promises can God make us, or what further evidence can He give us of His love?

As we call God our Shepherd, because He guides us, so we may call Him our King, because He defends us; our Master, because He instructs us;

our Physician, because He heals us ; our Foster-Father, because He carries us in His arms ; and our Guardian, because He watches so carefully over us, and protects us. The Holy Scripture is full of such names as these. But yet, there is not one that expresses a more tender love, or reveals His Providence more clearly, than that of Spouse,—a title which He often assumes in the Canticles, and in other places throughout the Scripture. By this loving name, He invites the soul of the sinner to call on Him. What, then, may we not hope from Him who takes this title, for He will not bear it in vain ?

But what need is there to search the Bible for titles, since every name that promises us any good, may be applied to God ? For he who loves and seeks Him, shall find in Him all he desires. For this reason, St. Ambrose says : “ We have all things in Jesus Christ, and Jesus Christ is all things to us. If we need a cure for our wounds, He is a physician ; if we are burning with the fire of concupiscence, He is a refreshing fountain ; if we are weary with the burden of our sins, He is justice itself ; if we are afraid of death, He is life ; if we hate darkness, He is light ; if we would go to heaven, He is the way.” See here, how many titles God has ; for although He is but one in Himself, yet, He is all things for us, that He may heal all our infirmities.

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapter VIII.

FOURTH READING.

*On the Grace of the Holy Ghost bestowed upon
virtuous Souls, and the Light with which
He favors them.*

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

From this fatherly Providence, as from a fountain, flow all the favors which God bestows on them who serve Him ; for this Providence supplies them with all necessities for obtaining their end, that is to say, their perfection : it assists them in all their wants, infusing into their souls the virtues and habits requisite for this end. Among these habits, the chief is sanctifying Grace ; because, next to this divine Providence, it is the principle of all supernatural gifts. It is the first robe given to the prodigal son on his return to his father's house.

Should you ask me : What is this Grace ? I answer with theologians : that Grace is a participation of the divine nature, that is, of God's sanctity, purity, and greatness. By means of this Grace, man rises from the baseness he derived from Adam, to partake of the sanctity of God ;—divesting himself of himself, to put on Jesus Christ. Holy Writers

explain this best by a familiar example : A piece of iron taken out of the fire, sparkles and looks red like fire, but it remains iron all the same ; retaining the name and substance it had before, though the brightness, heat, and other accidents, belong to fire. So Grace, which is a heavenly quality infused by God into the soul, transforms man into God, in such a manner, as to make him, in some measure, partake of the virtues and purity of God, without ceasing to be man. Thus was he transformed, who said : “ I live, now ; not I, but Christ liveth in me.”

Grace, moreover, is a spiritual ornament, formed by the hands of the Holy Ghost, which renders the soul so acceptable to God, that He adopts her for His daughter, and takes her for His bride. In this ornament the Prophet gloried, when he said : “ I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, and my soul shall be joyful in my God ; for He hath clothed me with the garments of salvation ; and with the robe of justice He hath covered me, as a bridegroom decked with a crown, and as a bride adorned with her jewels.” This is the robe of divers colors in which the King’s daughter, seated at the right hand of her bridegroom, was arrayed ; for, from Grace, spring the different virtues and divine habits which constitute her beauty.

From what has been said, we may judge of the effects Grace produces in the soul wherein it resides. The principal effect is to make it so fair and lovely in the eyes of God, that He chooses her for His

daughter, His spouse, His temple, and His habitation, where he delights to dwell with the children of men. Another effect is, that Grace not only embellishes the soul, but strengthens it by means of the virtues it brings with it. For this reason, the Angels, admiring her beauty, say: "Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army in array?" Grace, then, as we see, is like a complete suit of armor which protects a man from head to foot; and which so strengthens him, that, as St. Thomas says, the least degree of Grace suffices to overcome all the devils and all sorts of sin.

Another effect of Grace, is, to make man so pleasing to God, and to give him such power with Him, that all his actions, provided they be not evil, and be offered for a supernatural end, are meritorious of eternal life. So that, not only acts of virtue, but even natural actions, as eating, drinking, sleeping, and the like, are acceptable to God, and merit an eternal recompense. -

Besides all this, Grace makes man the adopted son of God and heir to His kingdom. It causes his name to be written in the book of life, wherein all the just are registered, and gives him a claim to the inheritance of heaven. This is the privilege our Saviour so highly commended to His disciples when, observing how pleased they were that devils had obeyed them in His name, He said to them: "Rejoice not in this, that the devils are subject unto

you, but rejoice in this, that your names are written in heaven." And thereby, He clearly testifies that this is the greatest treasure the heart of man can desire.

To conclude : Grace qualifies man for all kinds of good ; makes the way to heaven smooth and easy, and the yoke of Christ light and pleasant ; it makes a man run in the path of virtue ; cures the infirmities of corrupt nature ; and makes that easy and light which before seemed above his strength. By means of those virtues which proceed from it, Grace strengthens all the faculties of the soul ; enlightens the understanding ; inflames the heart ; refreshes the memory, fortifies the free-will ; moderates the concupiscible appetite, that it may not yield to evil, and animates the soul that it may not be slothful in the pursuit of virtue. To gluttony, it opposes temperance ; to the desires of the flesh, chastity ; to pride, humility ; still more ; by Grace, God dwells in our souls, that by His presence, He may govern, defend, and conduct them to heaven. He is there like a king on his throne, like a general in his army, like a father in his family, like a master in his school, like a shepherd amidst his flock ; exercising in a spiritual manner all these offices which are so many effects of His Providence. But, if Grace is the source of so many goods ; if it is an inseparable portion of virtue, can any man refuse to imitate the prudence of the wise merchant in the Gospel, who gave all he possessed for the pearl of so great value ?

Another privilege of virtue, is, a particular wisdom, which God imparts to the just ; this wisdom, like all other goods, proceeds from Grace, which, for this reason, the Holy Scripture calls unction. For, as oil is good both for giving light and curing wounds ; so this divine unction heals the wounds of our will, and enlightens the darkness of our understanding. This is the oil, more precious than any balsam, which David exalted, when he said : “ Thou, O Lord, hast anointed my head with oil.” It is clear, that he speaks not here of a human head, or of material oil ; but of a spiritual head, the noblest part of our souls, the seat of our understanding ; and of the spiritual oil, which is the light of the Holy Ghost, that feeds this lamp. Thus, this holy king confesses that God had revealed to him the most hidden secrets of his wisdom.

St. Thomas teaches that the knowledge of God’s goodness and beauty, increases in the souls of the just, proportionably to the love they have for Him. So that, if there is an advance of one hundred degrees in the one, there will be an equal advance in the other ; because, he that loves much, must know a great many qualities in the object beloved, which elicit love ; and so, on the contrary.

What we say of the love of God, is also to be understood of fear, of hope, and of horror of sin ; which the soul can never hate above all things, unless it is conscious of the magnitude of the evil which deserves to be thus hated. Now, as the Holy Ghost

requires all these dispositions to be in the soul of a just man, He imparts the knowledge that produces them.

This knowledge is a great light to the understanding, a delicious food to the will, and the greatest joy to man. The Prophet calls it sometimes, a pasture; sometimes, a refreshing water; again, a table supplied with meats to strengthen him against all the power of his enemies; for which reason, the same Prophet begs for this interior light and instruction, in that divine Psalm: "Blessed are the undefiled." To this end, he says in one place: "O Lord, I am Thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know Thy testimonies;" and in another place: "Open Thou my eyes, O Lord, that I may behold the wondrous things of Thy law."

Hence, what greater honor than to have such a Master, than to study at such a school, where the Lord Himself teaches His elect this heavenly wisdom! And that you may not look on this doctrine as common and ordinary, hear what the Royal Prophet says of it: "I have more understanding than all my teachers, because Thy testimonies are my meditation; I understand more than the aged, because I have sought after Thy commandments." Nay, the Lord promises more than all this by His Prophet Isaias to those who serve Him. "The Lord," says he, "shall give thee rest, and shall fill thy soul with brightness. Thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters shall not fail."

What brightness is this, wherewith God fills the souls of His servants, but the knowledge He gives them of things necessary to their salvation? He shows them the beauty of virtue, the hideousness of vice; the value of the world, the worth of Grace; the greatness of eternal glory, the sweetness of the consolations which the Holy Ghost bestows; the goodness of God, the malice of the devil, and the shortness of life. God, as the same Prophet observes, by virtue of this knowledge, makes His servants dwell on high, that they may behold the King in His beauty, and look down upon the earth which is very remote. Therefore, the things of this world are of so little value to them, because they see them such as they really are; and they have so high an esteem of the goods of heaven, because they behold them so near.

For this reason, they who participate in this heavenly gift, do not glory in prosperity, nor are they troubled in the adversities that befall them. Hence, these words of Solomon: "The just, like the sun, ever remain in the same state; but the fool changes like the moon." Upon these words St. Ambrose says very well: The wise man is not alarmed by fears, he does not change his views by force of power; he is not elated by prosperity, nor dejected by adversity; because where wisdom dwells, there also, courage, constancy and fortitude reside: so that the soul of the wise man is always in the same disposition; it neither rises nor falls by the

changes that occur ; it is not carried away by the winds of doctrine ; but it remains stable in Jesus Christ, resting on these two firm foundations,—faith and charity.

Nor are we to wonder at the marvelous power of this wisdom ; it is not of earth, but of heaven ; it does not puff up, but edifies ; it does not enlighten the understanding by speculation, but it inflames the will by its heat. Thus was St. Augustine wonderfully moved, when he heard the Psalms and hymns of the Church sung ; he tells us that he wept. These voices, charming his ears, the words sunk down to his inmost soul, imprinting the truth in his mind, shedding in his heart the fervor of devotion, and drawing from his eyes abundant tears that filled him with joy and comfort. O blessed tears ! O happy wisdom ! bearing such fruit. O divine school ! Can we find in the world any wisdom to compare with this ? Job says : “ It cannot be bought for gold, neither shall silver be weighed for the price thereof. The richest goods of India, in their variety of colors, cannot be compared with it ; precious stones of great value, the richest vessels of gold and crystal are as nothing, when compared to this divine wisdom.”

This is one of the greatest rewards that can be offered, to excite you to the love of virtue ; it alone puts into your hands the key to this precious treasure, for Solomon says : “ He who observes the commandments of God will find wisdom.” This wisdom, does not always continue in the same degree, but

it receives a daily increase of light and knowledge. "The path of the just, says the Holy Spirit, is as the shining light that shineth more and more unto the perfect day,"—to the day of a blessed eternity wherein we shall have a full sight and knowledge of God Himself.

EIGHTH DAY.

FIRST READING FOR THE MORNING.

Following of Christ, Book III. chapter XLVII.

SECOND READING.

The Consolations which Virtuous souls receive from the Holy Ghost.

(From the Writings of Father Granada).

This privilege derives its source from the preceding, because this light which God imparts to His servants, is not confined to the understanding; it descends into the will, filling it with a divine gladness. The sun enlightens and warms: in the same manner, the Holy Ghost diffuses in the souls of the just, the most brilliant light and the sweetest consolations. The Psalmist says: "Light is risen to the just, and joy to the right of heart."

We must endeavor to describe the extent of this joy. As vice is the source of all evil, so virtue is the source of all good. This is a truth generally admitted; and yet, sinners deny that there is any pleasure in virtue. Tell me, then, O deluded man, if the way to heaven is so disagreeable as you assert, what does the Prophet mean when he says: "O Lord, how plentiful is the sweetness which Thou dost

reserve for those that fear Thee?" These words indicate not only the delights which the virtuous enjoy, but also the reason why they are unknown to the wicked: God conceals them from such. What, likewise, do these words of the same Prophet signify? "My soul shall rejoice in the Lord, and exult in God, my Saviour. All the powers of my soul shall cry out: O Lord, who is like to Thee?" Why does he employ these strong terms, if not to show us how truly admirable is the joy of the just. Although this joy resides in the spirit, nevertheless, it gushes out upon the flesh, in such degree, that the flesh, which delights chiefly in carnal things yet, by the communication of the spirit, is gladdened also with spiritual joys, and exults in God; so that, all the bones of the body, as it were, being ravished with this sweetness, men are forced to cry out: Who is like to Thee, O Lord? What pleasures are comparable to those we taste in Thy service? What content, what love, what peace, what delight can creatures afford us, compared with those we receive from Thee? What, again, does the Royal Prophet mean by saying: "The voice of rejoicing and of salvation is in the tabernacles of the just?" Does this not convince us that true peace and pleasure are not to be found in the abodes of sinners, but in the hearts of the just? What does he mean by these words: "Let the just feast and rejoice in the presence of God, and be delighted with gladness?" This is to show,

that the elect of God have also their feasts and banquets. Yes, "O Lord, they shall be inebriated with the plenty of Thy house, and Thou wilt make them drink of the torrent of Thy pleasures." How could the Prophet better explain the extent of these delights than by using this expressive language, showing the power of these charms in drawing the heart of man to God? For, as one inebriated with wine, loses the use of his senses, and remains, as it were, dead; so, in like manner, one who has drunk of this heavenly wine, becomes dead to the world, to its pleasures, and to all carnal joys.

We read again: "Happy is the people that know what jubilation is." Others would have said: Happy they who abound in riches, who are inclosed by strong walls. But holy David who understood the emptiness of earthly things, terms happy those only who from experience know what it is to rejoice in God; for this alone deserves the name of jubilation. St. Gregory says that this jubilation is joy of spirit; we can neither express it by words, nor reveal it by outward signs and deeds. Happy they, who in loving God, know from experience what this jubilation is.

It is written of St. Ephraim that he was often so overpowered by these divine consolations, that his body was too weak to support them, and he was forced to complain to God, saying: "Retire from me a little, O Lord, for my body cannot endure the weight of Thy sweetness." O unspeakable goodness!

O immense sweetness of this Sovereign Lord ! who communicates Himself with such profusion to His creatures, that their frail bodies cannot endure the abundant consolations He bestows !

Then it is, that by this heavenly inebriation the powers of the soul are lulled to rest ; by it, the soul enjoys the slumber of peace and life ; so that, rising above herself, she knows, loves, and enjoys pleasures that infinitely surpass all that nature could afford. As water over the fire, when it has attained a certain degree of heat, unmindful, as it were, of its own nature, which is to be heavy and tend downwards ; on the contrary, mounts upwards, borrowing the nature and levity of fire which imparts to it this extraordinary motion ; so, in like manner, the soul heated by this heavenly fire rises above herself, and, endeavoring to fly from earth to heaven, whence this flame descended, is transported with an ardent desire of enjoying God ; she runs eagerly in pursuit of Him, stretching out her arms to embrace Him, whom she so passionately loves. But, if she can neither overtake Him nor diminish the ardor of her desires, she faints and languishes, unable to attain her object ; and her only consolation is, to send up loving sighs to heaven, crying out with the Spouse of the Canticles : “ Tell my Beloved that I languish with love.”

It is a divine characteristic, says the Prophet, to be holy with the holy, and good with the good. Now, if the just man burning with love for God,

spends himself for His glory, what will not God do for the consolation and happiness of the just man? Ah! replies the Prophet Isaias; "The eye hath not seen, nor the ear heard what God has prepared for those who hope in Him." This is to be understood not only of the goods of glory, but also of those of grace.

But, if you ask me what is the chief source of the consolations which virtuous souls enjoy, the Lord will answer you by the mouth of the Prophet Isaias: "The children of strangers who approach the Lord to serve Him, to love Him, and to keep His covenant, I will bring them into my holy mount, and make them joyful in my house of prayer." It is, therefore, chiefly in this holy exercise that the Lord comforts His elect. For this reason, St. Lawrence Justinian says: "By prayer, the hearts of the just are inflamed with the love of their Creator; then, rising above themselves, they dwell in spirit amid the choirs of Angels, singing with them in the presence of the Lord; they love, they sigh, they praise, and weep; they eat, and are still hungry; they drink without being satisfied; and they endeavor with all the strength that love can impart, to transform themselves into Thee, O Lord;—contemplating Thee by faith, seeking Thee by desire, and rejoicing by charity, in Thy divine attributes. In this way they know, by experience, how true are the words Thou dost speak: "My joy shall be fulfilled in them." This joy, like a peaceful stream,

spreads over all the faculties of the soul ; it enlightens the understanding, animates the will, and gives to the memory only thoughts of God. Then, the soul lovingly embraces what it cannot comprehend, but which it would rather die than relinquish. As the Patriarch Jacob wrestling with the Angel, unwilling to suffer him to depart ; in like manner, the heart seems to wrestle here below with this divine sweetness, anxious to retain it, because it finds therein all the happiness it could desire. Like St. Peter on the mountain, it cries out : “ Lord, it is good for us to be here.” Then the soul understands these loving words of the Canticle : “ His left hand is under my head, and His right hand doth embrace me ; support me with flowers, and comfort me with apples, for I languish with love.”

Hence, the soul inflamed with this divine fire, desires nothing so much as to depart from the prison of the body, sighing day and night, because the time of her deliverance has not come. Death is the object of her longings, life is the trial of her patience. Then, quite astonished, she wonders within herself, how such treasures could have been so long concealed from her ; and, understanding that all men are capable of enjoying this great happiness, she desires to run up and down the street and public places to cry out : “ Fools, and madmen, whither do you run ? What are you in search of ? Why do you not hasten to enjoy this treasure ! Taste and see how sweet is the Lord ! happy are they who place their trust in

Him !” Thus, having once tasted spiritual enjoyments, carnal pleasures are disgusting to her ; she delights to be alone with the Lord ; honors are a burden to her ; and all she aims at, is to disengage herself from the world. She says with the Prophet : “ What have I, O Lord, in heaven, or what do I desire upon earth besides Thee ? My heart and my flesh have fainted away ; but God is my strength and my portion forever.” Holy truths seem no longer obscure to her ; she sees them now with different eyes ; and she feels such wonderful changes in her heart, that they serve as convincing proofs of all the dogmas of faith. She looks upon creatures as images of her Creator’s beauty, as mirrors of His glory, as the interpreters, as faithful messengers who bring her tidings of Him ; as fair portraits of His graces and perfections ; and as so many presents which the Bridegroom sends His beloved to win still more affection, while waiting to be conducted to the eternal nuptials celebrated in heaven.

The whole world to her is a book speaking incessantly of God :—as a letter from her Well-Beloved—and as a token of His love. Thus pass the nights of those who love God ; this is the sleep of repose to them ; for it is under the sweet and delightful influence of these peaceful nights, that the soul retires within herself, and falls into that slumber of which it is said : “ I sleep, but my heart watches.” And when her divine Spouse perceives her thus at rest within His arms, he is careful not to disturb

her, saying: "I adjure you, ye Daughters of Jerusalem, not to wake my beloved till she please."

You will tell me, perhaps, that these extraordinary favors are not granted to all, that only the perfect enjoy them. True, as a general thing, these special graces are reserved for privileged souls; nevertheless, God frequently bestows His sweet caresses even on those who have just entered His service. He gives them first, milk, as to children, to bring them gradually to eat more solid food. Call to mind the feasting and rejoicing that followed the return of the Prodigal Child. What was all this but a figure of the spiritual joy which a soul experiences, when she finds herself delivered from Egypt, and freed from the slavery of the demon. For how could he who has recovered his liberty, do otherwise than rejoice at so signal a benefit? What could he do less, than invite all creatures to help him give thanks to his deliverer, saying: Praise the Lord who has so gloriously triumphed!

The Providence that ministers to every creature according to its nature, weakness, age, and capacity, seems to require that similar favors should be granted to worldly men; for, of themselves, they are incapable of aspiring to spiritual things; nor could they otherwise resolve to enter upon this new path, nor trample the world and its charms under foot. Hence, Providence ordinarily smooths the path of virtue for converted sinners, that they may

walk conveniently therein, without stumbling, or looking back.

We have a striking figure of this truth in the journey which God required the children of Israel to make, in conducting them into the land of promise. When the Lord, says Moses, brought the children of Israel out of Egypt, He did not lead them through the land of the Philistines, although it was the shortest; fearing that they would return into Egypt, should they see the enemies they would have to encounter in this place. Now, the same Lord who was so careful in leading the Israelites into the land of promise, is no less so, in bringing those to heaven whom He is pleased to call to this happiness, when He withdraws them from this world.

THIRD READING.

Common Rules, chapter ix.

FOURTH READING.

*Of the Vigilance and Courage necessary to
walk in the path of Virtue.*

(From the Writings of Father Granada.)

Christian justice comprises so many virtues, that the narrow limits of our understanding do not permit us to embrace them all in their full extent; therefore, it is indispensable, to labor for the acquisition of one

general virtue which comprises all the others, and which, as far as possible, supplies the want of all others. This virtue is no other than a constant solicitude and vigilance, and a continual attention to all we do or say, that so everything may be regulated by reason. We should in this exercise, imitate a prudent ambassador who is to address a sovereign prince on important matters. His attention is concentrated on the points he is to treat; on his words, on the tone of voice, and even on the motions of his body. In like manner, the servant of God should give close attention to every thought and action; so that, whether he speaks, or maintains silence, he may always hold the compass in his hand, measuring his words, actions, and thoughts, in order to square them to the law of God, to the dictates of reason, and to the rules of propriety.

The Holy Spirit exhorts us to this vigilance when He says: "Watch carefully over yourself and over your own soul." The soldiers of Jesus Christ should, like those mysterious animals spoken of by Ezechiel, be full of eyes, to follow the movements of their numerous enemies, and to discover the snares they set for them. The same lesson is inculcated, by the position of the seventy warriors that guarded the bed of Solomon. Each had his sword upon his thigh, ready to draw it from its scabbard; to show what extraordinary vigilance is required of him who walks in the midst of so many enemies.

Besides the dangers to which we are exposed, another reason for the necessity of this virtue, is the difficulty of attaining the perfection of the spiritual life; for, to lead the life which God desires of us; to preserve ourselves without stain in the midst of the corruption of the world; to live in the flesh without being defiled, are things so elevated, so far above the strength of nature, that to attain thereto, we need all the helps we have proposed; and, moreover, God must assist us by His grace.

To facilitate the exercise of vigilance, Seneca proposes the following means: "The man who wishes to acquire virtue," says he, "should imagine himself in the presence of one for whom he has the most profound veneration; and endeavor to do and say everything as if that person were really present."

Another means, is, to think that we have no longer to live than the present day: performing all our actions as if we were fully persuaded we should appear at night before the tribunal of divine justice, to render an account of our life. But the most efficacious means of all, is, to walk always in the presence of God, as far as this is possible; having Him ever before our eyes, and perform all our actions as in the presence of so sovereign a Majesty. This attention which we recommend, should be with reference to two objects: one, considering God interiorly, walking before Him, adoring Him, praising and reverencing Him; loving and thanking Him, and offering to Him a perpetual sacrifice of

devotion on the altar of our heart; the other, exercising great watchfulness in all we undertake; performing all our actions in such a manner, as never to depart from the path of virtue. Thus, with one eye we look upon God, asking His grace; and with the other, we observe ourselves, to regulate well our conduct.

The preceding advice has, in some measure, furnished us with eyes to recognize our duty; the following will furnish us with arms, that is, fortitude, to accomplish it. We observe in virtue two difficulties: the first consists in distinguishing between good and evil; and the second, in overcoming the one and pursuing the other. We have need of vigilance for the one, and of fortitude for the other. Without the attention resulting from vigilance, we would be blind; and void of fortitude, we would accomplish nothing.

This fortitude is not that cardinal virtue which holds a middle rank between rashness and fear; but a general fortitude necessary for overcoming all the difficulties that impede our progress in the practice of the virtues. Hence, it always accompanies them, with sword in hand, to open a passage for them and to protect them. Examine each virtue, there is not one but presents some difficulty; every one is open to assault from self-love, the world, or the devil. Without fortitude, virtues would be powerless; how could they resist these attacks? But they will readily gain the victory if fortitude be exercised.

Therefore, it is expedient to point out in this place an error into which they, who begin to serve God, ordinarily fall. After having read in some pious books, of the wonderful consolations of the Holy Ghost, they imagine that the path of virtue is extremely pleasant, without the mixture of any trouble; hence, they make no more preparation for it, than if they were undertaking a most easy and delightful task; therefore, instead of arming themselves for the fight, they adorn themselves as for a bridal-day; they do not consider that if the love of God is most sweet in itself, the way that leads to it is, nevertheless, very hard and toilsome. They should, at least, reflect that self-love must be overcome; that they will always have themselves to fight against, and this is the fiercest struggle of all.

It is true, that God has great consolations in store for those who labor faithfully in His service, and who have exchanged the pleasures of earth for those of heaven; but this exchange is absolutely requisite; and if we do not divest ourselves entirely of our former evil habits, we cannot hope to share these comforts. Manna was not given to the children of Israel until they had consumed all the flour they had carried out of Egypt.

But, to return to our subject: they who are not armed with this fortitude, cannot expect to obtain what they are in search of; they certainly, will never find it, unless a change is wrought in their affections and desires. They must be convinced, that repose

is purchased by toil, victory by fighting, joy by tears, and the love of God by hatred of self. This is the reason why sloth and laziness are so often condemned in the proverbs, and fortitude and diligence so highly commended.

You will ask me, perhaps, what are the means of acquiring this fortitude which, like all other virtues, has its difficulties. The first means is, to hold it in great esteem, because it is the key and guardian of the precious treasure of all virtues. Why does the world fly from virtue? because it is terrified by the difficulties that attend the practice of it. The sluggard says: "There is a lion in the way; I shall be killed in the middle of the street."

This fortitude overcomes self-love; and when this enemy is once routed, God, Himself, immediately comes in its place; since, according to St. John: He that abides in charity, abides in God.

Another powerful consideration, is, the example of so many holy men whom we see in the world poor, worn out with fasting and watching, destitute of all the conveniences of this life; some of whom are so desirous of suffering and mortification, that, as merchants hasten to the best fairs, and scholars to the most famous Universities, so these men seek the most austere monasteries where they find no food but hunger; no riches but poverty; no pleasures but the cross and constant mortification.

What can we imagine more opposed to the practice of the world and to the inclinations of the greater

portion of mankind, than to penetrate into distant countries seeking privation and suffering? This, certainly, is contrary to flesh and blood, but it is entirely conformed to the Spirit of God.

But, what most strongly condemns our delicacy, is the example of so many Martyrs, who have undergone the severest tortures, for the purchasing of the kingdom of heaven. Almost every day in the year the Church places before us the example of some of these courageous souls ; not so much to honor them by the celebration of their feast, as to edify us by the example they have left us. One day, we have the example of a Martyr who was broiled ; again, of one that was flayed alive ; another, cast into the sea ; another, thrown headlong from a rock ; another, whose flesh was torn off with red-hot pincers ; another, pulled limb from limb ; another, shot to death with arrows ; another, plunged into a cauldron of boiling oil. And, as if one torture was not enough to take away their life, several of them were subjected to all the tortures that human nature could suffer. How many were carried from prison to the whipping-post ; from the whipping-post to the stake ; thence to be torn with iron hooks ; and, after all this, they died by the sword, which not unfrequently, was the only instrument that could deprive them of life, although it could not hurt their faith nor daunt their courage. What shall I say of the inventions which the cruel ingenuity, not of men, but of demons, devised to overcome the constancy of the soul by

tortures of the body? In some instances, after having had their members slashed and torn, these Martyrs were laid upon beds of nettles and sharp pieces of stones and tiles, that being extended thereon, new tortures might be inflicted ; so that the body became a universal sore, while their faith, at the same time, was assailed by this accumulation of unheard-of torments.

Nevertheless, these Martyrs were not differently constituted from us ; their bodies were formed of the same clay as ours ; they had no other God than ours to assist them ; nor was the glory they expected any other than that which we hope for. Now, if they underwent such torments and cruel death to obtain eternal life, shall we hesitate to mortify the irregular desires of the flesh for the attainment of the same happiness? Shall we refuse to fast one day, when these holy men died of hunger? Shall we consider it burdensome to say a few prayers on our knees, with devotion, when these Saints continued to pray even while hanging on the cross? Shall we be unwilling to mortify and retrench our desires and passions in small things, when these men so cheerfully gave their limbs to be torn in pieces? Why should we be loath to take a little time every day for recollection in our oratory, when these Saints were happy to remain shut up in prisons and dungeons?

But, if these examples have no effect upon us, let us raise our eyes to the sacred wood of the

Cross ; let us consider who He is that is attached to it, and who, for love of us, suffers thereon the most cruel torments. "Consider Him," says the Apostle, "who endured such contradictions from sinners, for fear you should lose courage in suffering." This is an astonishing example, in what way soever you look at it : if you reflect on His sufferings, they could not have been greater ; if you ask who it is that endures them, we answer, an infinite Majesty ; if we would know the cause for which He suffers ; it is, not to expiate His own sins, being innocence itself, nor for any need He had of them, for He is Master of all created things ; but, through pure goodness and love. And, notwithstanding His infinite Majesty, He underwent, in body and soul, torments that far exceed the united sufferings of the Martyrs and of all men. His torments were a subject of astonishment to heaven and to earth ; the very rocks were rent asunder, and all nature was in desolation. Shall man alone remain insensible ? Will he be so ungrateful as not to follow, in any degree, an example that has been given expressly for him ? Our divine Saviour, Himself, says : "Did it not behoove Christ to suffer, and thus enter into His glory ? Since Jesus Christ came into the world to conduct us to heaven, and since the Cross is the way that leads thereto, it was fitting that He should be the first attached to it ; that animated by His example, the servant might have strength and courage to endure light sufferings, seeing the

Master so constant under the most horrible torments.

After this, who would not be ashamed to seek the delights and pleasures of this life, when he sees Jesus Christ, with all His friends, subjected to the most cruel tortures? All this should be a powerful inducement to the practice of virtue.

In concluding this chapter, I shall add that excellent sentence of our Saviour: "If any one will come after me, let him take up his cross and follow me." In these few words, our Saviour gives us an epitome of the Gospel; by them He teaches us that a perfect Christian enjoys a profound peace and a sort of paradise, provided he remains attached to the Cross with Jesus Christ, by the practice of self-renunciation.

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